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LIFE OF DR. ADAM SMITH.

Introduction.

It is well known that the late lamented Dugald Stewart, amidst the profound and comprehensive studies to which his life was dedicated, became the biographer of three of his countrymen—two of them being amongst the most distinguished of whom Scotland has to boast: these were, Dr. Robertson the historian, and Adam Smith. His friend and tutor, Dr. Reid, we place, where we conceive the world has placed him, in a rank far below these, and where we cannot but think Mr. Stewart would himself have placed him, if his affectionate remembrance of his early instructor had left his judgment perfectly impartial with respect to Dr. Reid's merits as a philosopher.

Since the days of the *Memorabilia*, when Xenophon became the biographer of Socrates, there has been seen perhaps no proportion so equal betwixt the writer and his subject, as when Dugald Stewart wrote the "*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith.*" Yet, congenial as was the theme, and beautifully as he has illustrated the *writings*, there is a deficiency in the *life*. It was observed of Mallet, that he wrote the life of Lord Bacon, and forgot that he was a philosopher. This, at least, cannot be said of Mr. Stewart. He has kept the philosopher so much in mind, that he has almost forgotten the man. In his review of the works of the distinguished person, in his criticism and his comments, we find everything that we can desire and might expect, even from the pen of Mr. Stewart; but we look in vain for those traits of personal character, those slight yet important incidents and anecdotes which marked the individual, which, when preserved and depicted, form the great charm of biography, and which serve, far more than the most laboured disquisition or panegyric, to recommend to us, and quicken our interest in, the circumstances by which the subject of the memorial acquired his celebrity. Mr. Stewart seems to have entertained a difference of opinion upon this point; possibly he deemed it beneath the dignity of the life of a philosopher.

Yet the earliest and most amusing, if not most accurate of biographers thought otherwise. "It is not always," says Plutarch, "in the most distinguished exploits that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but frequently an action of small note, a short saying or a jest distinguishes a person's real character more than the greatest battles or the most important actions. As painters labour the likeness in the face, so must we be permitted to strike off the features of the soul, in order to give a real likeness to these great men*." Upon this principle has this inimitable writer left us a record of the lives of upwards of fifty warriors, legislators, and statesmen, investing them with an interest and a wisdom which will delight and instruct the last generations of mankind.

There may have been biographers who have carried their passion for detail and minute anecdote somewhat too far, but even in such cases we feel it is rather ungrateful to condemn them; and we might take the very extreme of this class, even Boswell himself, with all his faults, and almost challenge the world to produce another book of biography of equal interest with the *Life of Johnson*.

But betwixt Plutarch and Boswell there is an interval, almost as wide as between Auchinleck and Chæroneia; and Mr. Stewart ought not, perhaps, strictly to have conformed himself to the example of either. Yet we cannot but regret that much that would interest us has been lost for ever; those many peculiarities, those lights and shadows which would have made us familiar with the man, and given a graphic reality to the portrait. Mr. Stewart was the personal friend of Adam Smith during many of his latter years; and for all that related to him previously, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have collected information and anecdote in the society of Edinburgh. If it be one object, as it must be presumed of the biographer, to extend the fame of the person whose life he undertakes to record, surely it must be obvious how

* Plutarch—*Life of Alexander*.

much is lost in this respect by this partial mode of exhibiting him.

"The else unvalued circumstances in the lives of literary men" (says Mr. Mackenzie in his "Memoir of the Life of John Home") "acquire an interest with the reader, proportionate to that which the writings of the author have excited; and we are anxious to know every little occurrence which befel him, who was giving, at the period when these occurrences took place, the product of his mind to the public. We are anxious to know how the world treated a man who was labouring for its instruction or amusement, as well as the effect which his private circumstances had on his literary productions, or the complexion, as one may term it, which those productions borrowed from the incidents of his life. These considerations afford an apology for the narratives of the comparatively unimportant occupations which the world peruses with so much interest—they help that personification of an author which the reader of his work so naturally indulges; and if they sometimes put him right in his estimate of the influence of genius or feeling upon conduct, they serve at the same time as a moral lesson on the subject, and a mark as it were of the unexpected shores or islands, sometimes it may be rocks or quicksands, on the chart of life."

SECTION 2.—*From the birth of Dr. Smith till the publication of the "Theory of Moral Sentiments."*

ADAM SMITH was born at Kirkaldy, in Fifeshire, on the 5th of June, 1723. His father was comptroller of the customs at that place, and had in early life practised as a writer to the signet in Edinburgh. He had been for some years private secretary to the Earl of Loudon, when he received his appointment to the customs at Kirkaldy. His wife was the daughter of Mr. Douglas, of Stratheny; and Adam was the only issue of their marriage. His mother lived long enough to enjoy the celebrity of her son; but he had the misfortune never to have known the care and affection of his father, whose death took place a few months previous to the birth of his distinguished offspring. His constitution during infancy, we are informed, was weak and sickly, and required the tenderest solicitude of his surviving parent for the preservation of his life. It is remarkable that in this respect a nearly similar for-

tune should have attended two of the most remarkable men whom Scotland has produced. It was the fate of Hume to lose his father in his infancy, and to owe, like Smith, to a widowed mother, all the protection and care so requisite at that early period. The mother of our young philosopher was, by some persons, accused of over-indulging her son, but the indulgence of the parent was best vindicated by the growing temper and disposition of the child; and Mrs. Smith during her long life (which extended till within twelve years of the death of her son) had never occasion to reproach herself for any indiscreet kindness, but had the happiness to see her parental care acknowledged to the hour of her death, by every attention which filial affection could prompt.

An accident befel him when he was about three years of age, which, if it had not proved fatal to his life, might have strangely altered his future destiny, and might thus, perhaps, have influenced, in no small degree, the progress of political science in Europe. He had been on a visit to his uncle, Mr. Douglas of Stratheny; and as he was one day amusing himself at the door of the house, he was carried off by a party of gipsies. Happily he was very soon missed by his uncle, who having learned that a set of vagrants had recently passed that way, pursued and overtook them in Leslie Wood—with feelings with which it is easy to sympathize, even without reference to the importance of the life he had preserved.

When the period arrived at which it was deemed proper that he should be sent to school, he was placed under the care of Mr. David Miller, who then taught the school at Kirkaldy,—a person who enjoyed no inconsiderable reputation as a teacher in his day, and who had the fortune to educate, about the same period, a few men of greater eminence in after life than are frequently to be found registered in so obscure a seminary. With some of these Smith contracted an intimacy which lasted during their lives. We are not exactly informed of the time when he was placed under Mr. Miller's care, but we know that he remained with him till he attained his fourteenth year. His great love of books, even in those early years, attracted the notice of his schoolfellows, as did the extraordinary powers of his memory, and those habits of mental abstraction for which he was remarkable

throughout life. His love of reading was indulged and strengthened the more, owing to the weakness of his constitution, which prevented his joining in the more active pastimes of his companions. Their fondness for him was not lessened by habits which schoolboys in general might be apt to regard as unsocial, but it arose from the excellence of his temper, and the warm and generous feelings which distinguished him.

It is to be regretted that we know so little of the nature of his reading at this period of his life. That he was well grounded in the dead languages, and that the classic writers of Greece and Rome were favourite objects of his study whilst he was under the care of Mr. Miller, may safely be presumed. His works afford abundant evidence of the extent of his acquirements in this department of literature, a relish for which never deserted him in after life, even amidst the profound inquiries which occupied his attention while engaged in the composition of his greatest work. Had Dr. Smith, however, like Gibbon, become his own biographer, or like Johnson, had he had the fortune to leave behind him such a chronicler as Boswell, we might then have seen, perhaps in the earliest unprescribed studies of the recluse student at Kirkcaldy, the first indications of that tendency of mind and mode of thinking which gave promise of the future author of the "Wealth of Nations."

In 1737, at the age of fourteen, he left Kirkcaldy, and was removed to the University of Glasgow, where he had the happiness of studying under Dr. Francis Hutcheson, of whom he always spoke, as he has written, in terms of the highest admiration. The lectures of that distinguished professor may be fairly considered as having first directed his views to that branch of ethical philosophy so beautifully illustrated in the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," which he afterwards gave to the world, and in which he has equal merit in having confirmed what was right, and corrected what was wrong in the speculations of his eloquent tutor. It is said, however, that Mathematics and Natural Philosophy engaged the greater portion of his attention during his residence at Glasgow; but his "History of Astronomy" in the Posthumous Essays is the only one of his writings in which we discover much of the fruits of his acquaintance with those sciences. His illustrations are al-

most always drawn from history, poetry, and polite literature; and, though he prized the persons and the characters of mathematicians and natural philosophers, and has judged highly (perhaps partially) of the tendency of such studies upon the temper and morals of the individual*, it is quite clear that they were neither so congenial to his taste, nor did he estimate their importance to the interests of mankind as being in any respect equal to that of other branches of philosophy, and those more especially which he afterwards himself so largely illustrated and advanced. To these latter, therefore, to the history of mankind, to the moral, economical, and political phases which are presented in its progress, we may be assured, without any particular testimony, that his attention was very early directed, and for a long period of years in a great measure confined. But we have one fact that goes strikingly in proof of this, which is interesting on many accounts, and not the least so as pointing out the first and only book which we know to have been read by him about this period, and which must have been read from love alone, since it was read by stealth.

In 1740, after three years spent at Glasgow, he was removed to the university of Oxford, and entered at Baliol College as an exhibitor on Snell's foundation. It would appear that shortly after his arrival there, from some cause or other he had given occasion to suspect that his private hours were not always devoted to such books as the discipline of Oxford prescribes to its students; and it was determined therefore by the heads of the college, with more of zeal than honour, that the young philosopher from the north should be taken by surprise in his chamber, in order to ascertain whether the nature of his studies was really orthodox or not. Unluckily, he was found reading the "Treatise of Human Nature," then recently published, and the discovery was of course followed by a severe reprimand and the forfeiture of the forbidden volume. Smith, at that time, knew perhaps nothing more of the book he was perusing than that it was the production of a young Scotchman—a work, which as the author of it said himself, "fell dead-born from the press," little known and a good deal derided, but recommended to Smith by the subject

* Vide Theory of Moral Sent., Part III., Ch. 2.

of which it treats, by his love of metaphysics, and the profound and original speculations which it contained; as inviting to the young and free inquirer as they were alarming to the heads of the university. It was not till some years after this that the immortal author of the work in question became known to his young disciple, and that that enduring friendship was cemented betwixt them, which both of them have taken pains to record—"a friendship on both sides founded on the admiration of genius and the love of simplicity," as Mr. Stewart has beautifully expressed it, and which, without biasing the judgment of Smith, must have exalted the pride and the pleasure which he felt, when years after this, he cited him in the "*Wealth of Nations*" in language which many have thought savoured rather of the warmth of friendship than the calmness of sober judgment, as *by far the most illustrious philosopher and historian of the present age*.*

When Smith was sent to Oxford, it had been the intention of his family that he should study for the Church of England. He remained seven years at that renowned seat of learning; but long before he left it, not finding the ecclesiastical profession suited to his taste, he had abandoned all such intention, and preferred the hopes of such small emolument as his literary attainments might procure for him in his own country, to the higher prospects which the prudence of his friends had pointed out. As there is every reason to admire the independence of mind which induced him to abandon those prospects, we can have none to regret it on any other ground, from the direction which was thus given to the studies and the labours of his future life. There is no doubt that had Dr. Smith voluntarily made the Church his profession, he would have adorned it by genius and learning, that the purity of his life would have added force to the precepts which it would have been his duty to inculcate as a Christian teacher. But this advantage would have been too dearly purchased. The Church would more easily find a substitute for Smith as one of its ministers, than the world might have found one like him, capable of unfolding for its instruction those laws equally divine in their origin and beneficent in their results when rightly apprehended, which regulate

the order and advance the moral and political condition of society. The mind of Smith, which found in such subjects a boundless field for his contemplations, might have been confined, and at length contracted, by the professional study of theological learning. The great truths of religion are as simple as they are sublime; and their simplicity renders useless much that human ingenuity can do, while their sublimity defies it. To know God, says Seneca, is to worship him. And much of this knowledge is attained by looking attentively upon the glories of his creation.

It is to be lamented that we know so little of the life of Smith during that part of it which was passed at Oxford. What he thought of that university, of its discipline and its studies, he told the world many years after in a memorable passage of the "*Wealth of Nations*," which has never been forgiven by the worshippers of Oxford, and by all those who are prone to consider it a crime to point out the defects of any ancient institution. Strange it may seem that there should always be a number of persons prone to such a course, seeing that the corruptions and abuses which are incident to establishments of this kind, like the diseases in the animal body, have a natural tendency to bring on decay, and that the best friend to such institutions, like the best physician, is he who first discovers the disorder—a discovery necessarily antecedent to the suggestion of the remedy. Yet there are few mistakes so common as this in the world, and few more fatal to its improvement. It is the error of preferring the means to the end, the mere instrument, an instrument often worn out, and sometimes become useless, to the excellent purposes it was designed to work. It may be proper to enlarge a little upon this topic, on account of the unjust prejudice that has been excited against Dr. Smith, in consequence of his animadversions upon Oxford, and is constantly excited for the worst purposes against men like him, whose enlightened and benevolent efforts for the improvement of public institutions, instead of gratitude, have often experienced calumny and opposition. If Smith censured the discipline, or rather the want of discipline, and the abandonment of duty in the tutors and professors of Oxford in his day, what possible motive

could he have that is reconcileable with the acknowledged qualities of the man, but a zeal, a warm and indignant zeal, it may be, in behalf of that learning and science which was going to ruin, by the neglect of those who were appointed for their conservation? Of course it is unnecessary to say that we refer not to Oxford as it now is; but if it has been reformed since the days of Smith, it has been reformed only, because some have been found bold and wise enough, like him and after him, to proclaim that it stood in need of such reformation. Far be it from us, and from every friend of learning, to abate that just veneration for the institutions of our country; those especially which have the promotion of science and of virtue for their object, which is really their due—due often to their antiquity—to the excellence of their founders—and to the long catalogue of illustrious men who have been bred under them, and whose wisdom and learning, whose virtue and heroism in after life, seem, by a very natural and pleasing illusion, to become identified with the places in which they were educated.

Of the seven years which Smith passed at Oxford little, indeed, has been recorded. We have scarcely an incident relating to his private life, and as little do we know respecting his intellectual habits. Mr. Stewart presumes that he cultivated with particular care, at this time, the study of languages;—a study for which it would seem he had an unusual fondness, and in which, at all events, he is known to have excelled. But Smith studied languages more as a philosopher than a scholar, as they serve to throw light on the manners, the institutions, the modes of thought peculiar to different nations and ages. His knowledge of Greek was profound and accurate; and his taste and high admiration for the drama and literature of the Greeks, preserved to the latest period of his life, may be best traced to the studies and the society in which he mixed whilst at the university. Mr. Dalzell, the distinguished professor of Greek in the University of Edinburgh, has borne testimony to the extent and accuracy of Dr. Smith's acquaintance with that noble language, as often displayed in conversation with him on some of the nicest minutiae of grammatical criticism. He was accustomed at this time to exercise himself in translation

from various languages, chiefly French; and always spoke of it as useful for the acquisition of the art of composition, and for improvement in style. Gibbon has recommended the same practice in his own Memoirs, and a mode of study, we may venture to say, which was pursued and praised by two such distinguished writers, is well worth the attention of all who cultivate literature.

Upon quitting Oxford, Smith returned to Kirkcaldy, where he continued to reside with his mother for two years, with the most ardent application to study. In 1748 he removed to Edinburgh, and there commenced his connexion and friendship with many of the distinguished men who then adorned that city; and composed a society which included within its range an extent and variety of accomplishments, and a depth and solidity of philosophy and of learning, not easily equalled in any other, at any period of modern Europe. Among its members we find a vast portion of the names familiar to us, from having enriched the literature of our country in various departments, about the middle of the last century. Those of Hume and Robertson, of Blair, of Ferguson, of Lord Kames and John Home, are known to every reader; but there were others not less accomplished though less known to posterity, whose genius and talents added lustre, even to so brilliant an assemblage of men; Lord Elibank, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Loughborough, Sir William Pulteney, Lord Monboddo, Dr. Logan; these, and many others, we find enumerated in the "Select Society," which was formed in Edinburgh about that period; the list of which Mr. Stewart has preserved*. At this time commenced his memorable friendship with David Hume, the philosopher who had led the way into those very regions of moral and political inquiry, where Smith was destined to follow, guided chiefly, as he always confessed, and as was admitted by his admirers, by that light which had been shed upon them by the most subtle intellect, perhaps, which ancient or modern Europe has produced†.

It was not long after his settlement in Edinburgh, that the friendly patronage of Lord Kames induced Smith to com-

* Appendix to the Life of Robertson.

† It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that, in the panegyrics pronounced upon Hume, we refer merely to his celebrated writings upon moral and political science, and not to those upon religion.

mence a course of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, which he continued for a considerable time; until the high reputation which he had earned, seconded by the zeal of his friends, procured for him, in 1751, the professorship of Logic in the university of Glasgow. In 1752, upon the death of Mr. Thomas Craigie, he was advanced to the chair of Moral Philosophy in the same University; an office which he continued to fill for thirteen years;—a period which he was accustomed to look back upon, as the most useful and happy of his life. “It was indeed a situation,” says his biographer, “in which he was eminently fitted to excel, and in which the daily labours of his profession were constantly recalling his attention to his favourite pursuits, and familiarising his mind to those important speculations he was afterwards to communicate to the world.”

It is greatly to be regretted, that no part of his lectures whilst at Glasgow, has been preserved; but the following brief and very interesting account of them was furnished by one of Dr. Smith's pupils, who afterward became one of his warmest and latest friends. There is no necessity to apologise for presenting it to our readers, seeing that we cannot better supply the vacuum that would otherwise be left, owing to the very scanty materials which remain for a life of this distinguished man. “In the professorship of logic,” says one of his students, “to which Dr. Smith was appointed on his first introduction to this university, he soon saw the necessity of departing widely from the plan that had been followed by his predecessors; and of directing the attention of his pupils to studies of a more interesting and useful nature than the logic and metaphysics of the schools. Accordingly after exhibiting a general view of the powers of the mind, and explaining so much of the ancient logic as was requisite to gratify curiosity, with respect to an artificial method of reasoning, which had once occupied the universal attention of the learned, he dedicated the rest of his time to the delivery of a system of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. The best method of explaining and illustrating the various powers of the human mind, the most useful part of metaphysics, arises from an examination of the several ways of communicating our thoughts by speech, and from an attention to the principles of those literary composi-

tions, which contribute to persuasion or entertainment. The first part of these lectures, in point of composition, was highly finished; and the whole discovered strong marks of taste and original genius. His course of lectures on moral philosophy was divided into four parts. The first contained natural theology, in which he considered the proofs of the being and attributes of God, and those principles of the human mind on which religion is founded. The second comprehended ethics strictly so called; in the third part, he treated at more length of that branch of morality which relates to *justice*. Upon this subject he endeavoured to trace the gradual progress of jurisprudence, both public and private, from the rudest to the most refined ages, and to point out the effects of those arts, which contribute to subsistence, and to the accumulation of property, in producing corresponding improvements in law and government. In the last part of his lectures, he examined those political regulations, founded not upon the principle of justice, but of expediency, and which are calculated to increase the riches, the power, and the prosperity of a state: under this view he considered the political institutions relating to commerce, to finances to ecclesiastical and military establishments. In delivering his lectures, he trusted almost entirely to extemporary elocution. His manner was plain and unaffected, and as he seemed to be always interested in his subject, he never failed to interest his hearers. Each discourse consisted of several distinct propositions, which he endeavoured to prove and illustrate. In his attempts to explain them, he often appeared at first not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject, and spoke with some hesitation: as he advanced, the matter seemed to crowd upon him, his manner became warm and animated, and his expression easy and fluent. In points of controversy, it was discernible that he conceived an opposition to be made to his opinions, and that he was led to support them with greater energy and vehemence. By the fulness and variety of his illustrations the subject swelled in his hands, and acquired a dimension, which, without a repetition of the same views, was calculated to seize the attention of his audience, and to afford them pleasure and instruction in following the same object through all the diversity

of shades and aspects in which it was presented, and afterwards in tracing it backwards to that original proposition or general truth from which this beautiful train of speculation had proceeded. His reputation as a professor was raised very high; and a multitude of students from a great distance resorted to the University merely upon his account. Those branches of science which he taught became fashionable at this place, and his opinions were the chief topics of discussion in clubs and literary societies. Even the peculiarities in his pronunciation, or manner of speaking, became frequently the objects of imitation."

In the year 1755, a few of the eminent men then at the head of literature in Scotland had established a journal under the title of the "Edinburgh Review;" a title rendered familiar to the readers of the present day by the celebrity of the literary periodical journal under that name, which was established in the same city about half a century later. All that we learn of the plan and object of this design must be gathered from the only two numbers which were published of it. Smith, as is now well known, was a contributor, and, amongst other papers, was the author of the "Review of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary," then recently published, and of a very interesting letter addressed to the Editor, on the state of literature on the Continent, especially that of France. To the curious in literary relics, even these papers will be valuable, as appertaining to so celebrated a man, and the first of the productions of his genius which were committed to the public. In other respects it is perhaps unnecessary to say, that they can add nothing to the fame of the writer. Dr. Robertson was also a contributor; Mr. Hume was not; and we are indebted to Mr. Mackenzie for an amusing anecdote accounting for the omission. Such, we are told, was the extreme artlessness of his character, that his friends feared from it the discovery of their secret;—as they also feared that their criticisms would be disarmed of all their force, from the extreme gentleness of his nature, which could not tolerate even the exercise of literary warfare. The Review immediately on its appearance had attracted, as might have been expected, considerable notice; and Mr. Hume was often expressing his astonishment amongst his friends, that a production of

so much talent should be going forward in the city in which he lived, and that he, connected as he was with every literary character of any distinction in it, should know nothing of its authors. It was determined at length that the secret should be communicated to him on a certain day, which was to be agreed upon, provided he would swear to preserve it. The day was fixed,—it was at a dinner where they were all expected to meet; the Review was mentioned;—Hume expressed, as he had done before, his surprise and curiosity on the subject, when he was told by one of the company, that provided he would take his oath not to divulge it, the secret should be communicated to him. "But how is the oath to be administered," said David, with his usual pleasantry, "to a man accused of so much scepticism as I am? you would not take my Bible oath, but I will swear by the *το καλον*, and the *το πρεπον**, never to reveal your secret." Unfortunately, either from want of perseverance in those connected with it, or of encouragement in the public to any undertaking of the kind, the Review was shortly after abandoned, and the distinguished partisan whom they had thus enlisted, had no opportunity of rendering his service in its support.

The Select Society, which we have before mentioned, was another association of which Smith was a member; formed for the purpose of philosophical inquiry, and the cultivation of the art of public speaking. It met for the first time in the Advocates' Library in May 1754, and ever after during the sitting of the Court of Session, every Friday evening. The most distinguished in the Society as speakers were Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Elibank, and Dr. Robertson. "David Hume and Adam Smith," says the memorial, "never opened their lips;" an intimation which may occasion some surprise, when it is considered that the two men thus remarked for being mute, were, unquestionably, the most original and profound thinkers in the whole of that gifted assemblage, as well as the most elegant, and (in Mr. Hume's case) the most fluent of writers, and possessing withal ample extent and variety of learning and knowledge. But however able and distinguished in the chair of moral philosophy at Glasgow, and whatever talents he was known to possess in the circle of his friends, it

* The beautiful and the fitting.

was not until the year 1759 that Dr. Smith gave evidence to the world of those talents, and laid the foundation of his fame, by the publication of his first great work, the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," in which he may be supposed to embody the result of a part of his professional labours in the University upon one of the most interesting problems in the whole range of philosophical inquiry.

There are few things more pleasing with respect to a character or a composition of established genius, when we contemplate them at a distance, than to ascertain what were the opinions entertained of them by their contemporaries. Fortunately we possess the most satisfactory and delightful of all evidence upon this subject concerning the work before us; but before we enter upon any remarks on this beautiful production, we shall present our readers with a letter from Mr. Hume, addressed to Dr. Smith, immediately after its publication. It would be an injury to withhold this effusion of friendship, which possesses the highest claim upon our attention, from its connexion with one of the most important epochs in the life of the eminent person of whom we are writing. Mr. Hume happened to be in London during the publication of the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," mixing in society most distinguished for rank, taste, and learning, and always anxious, with the generosity and affection which characterized him, to extend the fame and glory of his friend. If the work had been lost to the world, and we had possessed no other evidence of its merits, and of the admiration excited by its appearance, we might form a tolerable estimate of both from the contents of the following letter:—

"London, April 12th, 1759.

MY DEAR SMITH,

"I give you thanks for the agreeable present of your 'Theory.' Wedderburn and I made presents of our copies to such of our acquaintances as we thought good judges and proper to spread the reputation of the book. I sent one to the Duke of Argyle, to Lord Lyttleton, Horace Walpole, Soame Jenyns, and Burke, an Irish gentleman who lately wrote a very pretty treatise on the Sublime. Millar desired my permission to send one in your name to Dr. Warburton. I have delayed writing to you, till I could tell you something of

the success of the book, and could prognosticate with some probability, whether it should be finally damned to oblivion, or be registered in the temple of immortality. Though it has been published only a few weeks, I think there appear already such strong symptoms that I can almost venture to foretel its fate. In short, it is this — But I have been interrupted by a foolish impertinent visit of one who has lately come from Scotland. He tells me that the University of Glasgow intend to declare Rouet's office vacant upon his going abroad with Lord Hope. I question not but you will have our friend Ferguson in your eye, in case another project for procuring him a place in the University of Edinburgh should fail. Ferguson has very much polished and improved his treatise on 'Refinement,'* and with some amendments it will make an admirable book, and discovers an elegant and a singular genius. The 'Epigoniad' I hope will do, but it will be somewhat up-hill work. As I doubt not but you consult the reviews sometimes, at present, you will see in the 'Critical Review' a letter upon that poem, and I desire you to employ your conjectures in finding out the author—let me see a sample of your skill in knowing hands by guessing at the person. I am afraid of Lord Kames's 'Law Tracts;' a man might as well think of making a fine sauce by a mixture of wormwood and aloes, as an agreeable composition by joining metaphysics and Scotch law. However, the book I believe has merit, though few people will take the pains of diving into it.— But to return to your book, and its success in this town, I must tell you — A plague of interruptions! I ordered myself to be denied, and yet here is one that has broken in upon me again. He is a man of letters, and we have had a good deal of literary conversation. You told me that you were curious of literary anecdotes; and therefore I shall inform you of a few that have come to my knowledge. I believe I have mentioned to you already Helvetius's book 'De l'Esprit.' It is worth your reading, not for its philosophy, which I do not highly value, but for its agreeable composition†. I had a letter from him a few

* The same which he afterwards published under the title of "An Essay on the History of Civil Society."

† This passage is of itself tolerably conclusive as to the vulgar error of confounding Mr. Hume's philosophy with that of the French materialists of the last century and their English disciples in this.— Vide page 10, and note, p. 13.

days ago, wherein he tells me that my name was much oftener in the manuscript, but that the censor of books at Paris obliged him to strike it out. Voltaire has lately published a small work called 'Candide, ou l'Optimisme.' I shall give you a detail of it. But what is all this to my book? say you. My dear Mr. Smith, have patience; compose yourself to tranquillity: shew yourself a philosopher in practice as well as profession: think on the emptiness and rashness and futility of the common judgments of men; how little they are regulated by reason in any subject, much more in philosophical subjects, which so far exceed the comprehension of the vulgar.

— Non si quid turbida Roma

Elevet, accedas: examine improbum in illa
Castiges trutina: nec te quiesiveris extra.

A wise man's kingdom is his own breast; or if he ever looks farther it will only be to the judgment of a select few who are free from prejudice, and capable of examining his work. Nothing indeed can be a stronger presumption of falsehood than the approbation of the multitude; and Phocion, you know, always suspected himself of some blunder when he was attended with the applauses of the populace. Supposing, therefore, that you have duly prepared yourself for the worst of all these reflections, I proceed to tell you the melancholy news, that your book has been very unfortunate; for the public seem disposed to applaud it extremely. It was looked for by the foolish people with some impatience, and the mob of literati are beginning already to be very loud in its praises. Three bishops called yesterday at Millar's shop, in order to buy copies, and to ask questions about the author. The Bishop of Peterborough said he had passed the evening in a company where he heard it extolled above all books in the world. The Duke of Argyle is more decisive than he uses to be in its favour; I suppose he either considers it as an exotic, or thinks the author will be serviceable to him in the Glasgow elections. Lord Lyttleton says that Robertson, and Smith, and Bower, are the glories of English literature. Oswald protests he does not know whether he has reaped more instruction or entertainment from it. But you may easily judge what reliance can be put on his judgment, who has been engaged all his life in public business, and who never sees any faults in his friends. Millar exults and brags

that two-thirds of the edition are already sold, and that he is now sure of success. You see what a son of earth that is, to value books only by the profit they may bring him;—in that view I believe it may prove a very good book.

"Charles Townsend, who passes for the cleverest fellow in England, is so taken with the performance, that he said to Oswald, he would put the Duke of Buccleugh under the author's care, and would make it worth his while to accept of that charge. As soon as I heard this, I called on him twice, with a view of talking with him about the matter, and of convincing him of the propriety of sending that young nobleman to Glasgow; for I could not hope that he could offer you any terms which would tempt you to renounce your professorship: but I missed him. Mr. Townsend passes for being a little uncertain in his resolutions; so perhaps you need not build much on this sally.

"In recompense for so many mortifying things, which nothing but truth could have extorted from me, and which I could easily have multiplied to a greater number, I doubt not but you are so good a Christian as to return good for evil, and to flatter my vanity by telling me that all the godly in Scotland abuse me for my account of John Knox and the Reformation. I suppose you are glad to see my paper end, and that I am obliged to conclude with

"Your humble servant,

"DAVID HUME."

SECTION 3.—*The "Theory of Moral Sentiments."*

THE question which Dr. Smith undertook to investigate in the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," however little regarded in later times, had evidently attracted a very considerable share of attention in the early part of the last century. At the period when he applied himself to that investigation, it had been previously illustrated by some of the most ingenious and profound writers in our language. The inquiry into the nature and origin of virtue, had been treated of by the elegant and sublime Lord Shaftesbury, the logical and acute Bishop Butler, the eloquent and ingenious Dr. Hutcheson, and by Mr. Hume himself, in his celebrated treatise entitled "An Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals."

If it be true, as Mr. Stewart has

said, and as Smith himself always declared, that he owed more to the "Political discourses" of Mr. Hume, in the "Wealth of Nations," than to any other work which had appeared prior to his time, it cannot be doubted that in the work before us he was as much indebted to the principles unfolded in Mr. Hume's "Inquiry." In their results, the difference seems only to be this;—that, whereas Hume had resolved our moral perceptions into a general and social affection, Smith had taken pains to trace them, in all cases, to an immediate sympathy with the individual acting or acted upon. Upon nearly all collateral and fundamental points they were perfectly agreed. They were equally decided in considering the question in the outset as one of fact, to be determined by the invariable nature and recorded sentiments of mankind in all ages—not as one in which it is competent to philosophers to establish a standard of virtue, as was attempted by Cudworth and Clarke, without reference to those sentiments, upon some preconceived dogma of immutable right, and the eternal fitness of things; or upon any deduction of a remote and contingent utility, according to the system of Paley and Godwin, and others of the same school. Mr. Hume had dismissed, with the contempt it deserved, the doctrine of those who had denied the reality of any distinction in morals. He had shewn by the most unanswerable reasoning that their origin was to be found in sentiment, not in the subtleties of abstract ratiocination; and has overthrown for ever, in the opinion of all who are capable of reasoning on such subjects, the selfish system of ethics, revived by Hobbes in the seventeenth century, who had borrowed it from the school of Epicurus, and who bequeathed it as a theme of everlasting cavil and epigrammatic paradox to that of Helvetius and Rochefoucauld, and their followers, in later days. Dr. Smith, though he makes little direct reference to this system founded on the absolute selfishness of man, may be considered as having stated and pronounced upon the question in the opening passage of his work:—"How selfish soever man may be supposed," says he, "there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it; of this kind is pity or

compassion, words appropriated to signify our fellow feeling with the sorrow of others." "Sympathy," he adds, "though its meaning was originally the same, may now, however, be made use of to denote our fellow feeling with any passion whatever." And upon this principle he erects his system.

It is not our intention, nor is it, indeed, within the limits of the present memoir, to attempt an analysis of this very beautiful production. A brief outline of the leading principles on which it rests may be stated as follows:—

Upon our disposition to sympathize with the passions and actions of other men, is founded our sense of propriety or impropriety—upon that of sympathizing with the motives which excite or produce those actions and passions, is founded our sense of merit or demerit; the disposition which prompts us to gratitude or resentment, to reward or to punish the agent. An application of the sentiments thus acquired by observation of the actions and character of others, to the affections and conduct of ourselves in the various relations of life in which we are called upon to act, to judge, or to suffer, gives rise to a new perception; namely, the sense of duty, the natural and final result of the joint operation of those faculties of the heart and the understanding, with which man was endowed by his Maker, and not a factitious principle of expediency, which it was left for him to deduce from the remote and contingent consequences of the actions themselves.

Of the questions which are discussed in the science of morals, the two principal are these:—What is the characteristic property of virtue or merit? And by what faculty or power are we made cognizant of its existence? In Hume's Inquiry upon this interesting subject, he involved the solution of the second question in investigating the first. Smith seems to have pursued a different course, and to have blended the first question in his discussion of the second. We have always considered that the scope of Mr. Hume's reasoning upon this point has been strangely misconceived. In shewing, as he did conclusively to our minds, that utility was an invariable attribute of all virtue, his argument was limited, and he obviously meant it to be limited to the simple establishment of the *fact*; to proving, that by the constitution of man, and the natural economy of his

moral sentiments, there was no disposition of the mind, no action attended with the general approbation of mankind, which would not be found in its results beneficial to the species. He proved that nature had so constituted us, that by an involuntary sympathy we are formed to approve of these qualities even when we can have no personal interest in the case—nay, even when our personal interest may be opposed to the exercise of them. The sentiment or emotion thus excited, is the effect of a beneficent wisdom in the moral economy of man; an economy which proves the divine origin and government of the world even more cogently than the most exquisite of the merely physical arrangements so often adduced for the purpose. But having shewn this to be the fact, it never could be intended, by that accurate and profound thinker, to draw or to suggest the inference, that in pursuit of any imagined utility, any distant and general advantage which might present itself to his narrow capacity, it was competent for man to tamper with the order of God, and in neglect of the active impulses, the affections, and even the prejudices of his nature, which, by the direction of his wisdom, were made subservient to the most admirable ends—to erect a new *standard* of morals, and pretend to shew that that mode of action might be *expedient*, which his heart told him could never be *right*. But whatever doubts may exist as to the meaning of Hume, there can be none with regard to that of Dr. Smith upon this vital question; and it is in the admirable and really philosophical spirit which pervades and animates every part of his system, and this more especially, that we conceive the great excellence of his work to consist; for it may assuredly be said of it, that if it does not furnish the true “Theory of Moral Sentiments,” there can be no hesitation in admitting that its author has, at least, pointed out the way in which that theory must be sought. Smith saw, and strictly adhered to the distinction, as Mr. Stewart has well remarked*, which has been too little adverted to by ethical inquirers—the distinction betwixt the final and the efficient cause in all our moral determinations. The chapter in which this fundamental point is more directly enforced must be

considered as one of the finest portions of his book, exhibiting a specimen, perhaps, of the most refined and philosophical disquisition which human language has ever embodied. It lies so directly in our way, in the few observations we think it necessary to make upon this production of Dr. Smith;—it lies so much at the root of the main difficulty involved in the inquiry concerning the foundation of morals; the most interesting problem, perhaps, in metaphysics; it comes so strongly recommended in consequence to all who can take any interest in such discussions,—that we shall cite a part of it in this place, happy if, by accident, we should be the means in this way of introducing one of our readers to an acquaintance with the work in which it is to be found.

After having traced the growth of the emotions which arise from the spectacle of vice as well as of virtue, and having shewn that the resentment which we feel in the one case is the counterpart of the gratitude we feel in the other; and that it is this emotion which, constituting our immediate sense of demerit, prompts us to inflict the punishment which the well-being of society requires should be inflicted; and that the Author of Nature did not leave it to the slow and uncertain deductions of our reason to find out the means of attaining this end, but endowed us with an instinctive feeling of approbation of the very application most proper to attain it,—he proceeds to consider the “utility of this constitution of nature.” “In every part of the universe,” he says*, “we observe means adjusted with the nicest artifice to the end which they are intended to produce; and in the mechanism of a plant or animal body, admire how everything is contrived for advancing the two great purposes of nature, the support of the individual, and the propagation of the species. But in these, and in all such objects, we still distinguish the efficient from the final cause of their several motions and organizations. The digestion of the food, the circulation of the blood, and the secretion of the several juices which are drawn from it, are operations all of them necessary for the great purposes of animal life; yet we never endeavour to account for them from those purposes as from their efficient causes, nor imagine that the blood circulates, or that the food

* Philos. Hum. Mind, vol. ii.

* Theory of Moral Sent. vol. i. part ii. sect. 2.

digests of its own accord, and with a view or intention to the purposes of circulation or digestion. The wheels of the watch are all admirably adjusted to the end for which it was made—the pointing of the hour: all their various motions conspire, in the nicest manner, to produce this effect. If they were endowed with a desire and intention to produce it, they could not do it better: yet we never ascribe any such desire or intention to them, but to the watchmaker; and we know that they are put into motion by a spring which intends the effect it produces as little as they do. But though, in accounting for the operation of bodies, we never fail to distinguish in this manner the efficient from the final cause,—in accounting for those of the mind, we are very apt to confound these two different things with one another. When by natural principles we are led to advance those ends which a refined and enlightened reason would recommend to us, we are very apt to impute to that reason, as to their efficient cause, the sentiments and actions by which we advance those ends, and to imagine that to be the wisdom of man, which is in reality the wisdom of God. Upon a superficial view, this cause seems sufficient to produce the effects which are ascribed to it, and the system of human nature seems to be more simple and agreeable when all its different operations are in this manner deduced from a single principle.” After distinguishing in this way the efficient from the final cause of our moral impressions, our first perceptions of right and wrong,—after shewing that though it is absolutely necessary for the subsistence of society that the laws of justice should be observed, yet that it is not from a consideration of this necessity that we originally approve of their enforcement (though he admits that our regard for them may often be confirmed, and may sometimes require to be confirmed by such consideration),—he proceeds, “We frequently hear the young and the licentious ridiculing the most sacred rules of morality, and professing, sometimes from the corruption, but more frequently from the vanity of their hearts, the most abominable maxims of conduct. Our indignation rouses, and we are eager to refute and expose such detestable principles. But, though it is their intrinsic hatefulness and detestableness which originally inflame us against them, we are unwilling to assign

this as the sole reason why we condemn them, or to pretend that it is merely because we ourselves hate and detest them. The reason, we think, would not appear to be conclusive. Yet why should it not; if we hate and detest them, because they are the natural and proper objects of hatred and detestation? But when we are asked, why we should not act in such or such a manner, the very question seems to suppose, that to those who ask it this manner of acting does not appear to be for its own sake the natural and proper object of these sentiments. We must shew therefore, that it ought to be so for the sake of something else; and the consideration which first occurs to us is the disorder and confusion of society which would result from the universal prevalence of such practices. We seldom fail therefore to insist upon this topic. That it is not a regard, however, to the preservation of society, which originally interests us in the punishment of crimes committed against individuals, may be demonstrated by many obvious considerations. All men, even the most stupid and unthinking, abhor perfidy and injustice, and delight to see them punished. But few men have reflected upon the necessity of justice to the existence of society, however obvious that necessity may appear. The concern which we take in the fortune and happiness of individuals does not, in common cases, arise from that which we take in the fortune and happiness of society. We are no more concerned for the destruction or loss of a single man, because the man is a member or part of society, and because we should be concerned for the destruction of society, than we are concerned for the loss of a single guinea, because this guinea is part of a thousand guineas, and because we should be concerned for the loss of the whole sum. In neither case does our regard for the individuals arise from our regard for the multitude; but in both cases our regard for the multitude is compounded, and made up of the particular regards which we feel for the different individuals of which it is composed. As when a small sum is unjustly taken from us, we do not so much prosecute the injury from a regard to the preservation of our whole fortune as from a regard to that particular sum which we have lost; so when a single man is injured or destroyed, we demand the punishment of the wrong that has been done to him, not so much from a

concern for the general interest of society, as from a concern for that very individual who has been injured."

In a subsequent part of his work, wherein he treats of the "Influence of fortune upon our Moral Sentiments," and shews that, though it is the intention or affection of the heart, the propriety or impropriety, the beneficence or hurtfulness of the design that all praise or blame which can be bestowed upon an action must ultimately belong; yet, nevertheless, the result of those actions, the actual consequences which often proceed from them, do materially affect our sentiments:—He traces, in the same admirable spirit, the final cause of this inconsistency in our judgments; and remarks that—"that necessary rule of justice, that men in this life are accountable for their actions only, not for their designs or intentions, is founded upon this salutary and useful irregularity in human sentiments concerning merit and demerit, which appears at first sight so absurd and unaccountable. But," he concludes, "every part of nature, when attentively surveyed, equally demonstrates the providential care of its Author; and we may admire the wisdom and the goodness of God even in the weakness and the folly of men."

We have the greater pleasure in citing these passages, because we think that we may read in them the best refutation of that theory of expediency, which nothing but the reputation of Dr. Paley could ever have recommended to the world*—a theory which Mr. Stewart has characterised in a strain of indignant eloquence, that well became him on such a topic, as one which, "absolving men from the obligations imposed upon them by the moral constitution of human nature, abandons every individual to the guidance of his own narrow views concerning the complicated interests of society†."

It may not perhaps be unworthy of observation, before we close these few remarks upon the "Theory of Moral Sen-

timents," that the same principle of sympathy as a source of morals, from which Smith has deduced his system, appears to have been referred to by Polybius, in a remarkable passage of his history, for the same purpose. It is rather long for a quotation; but as it is curious in itself, and as Polybius is not a writer in every one's hands, we shall transcribe part of it in a note below; when possibly it may appear, after all, that the coincidence is rather in expression than in substance, and that it applies rather more strikingly to the doctrine of *sympathy with utility*, (the theory of Hume) than to that of sympathy as unfolded by Smith*.

SECTION 4.—*From the publication of the "Theory of Moral Sentiments" to that of the "Wealth of Nations."*

WE have seen, from the letter which Mr. Hume addressed to our author, something of the impression which was produced by the publication of his first great work. We shall shortly perceive that the hope therein expressed, that it might lead to an interesting connexion with the Duke of Buccleugh was not idly formed. In the meantime, however, it made no change in the life and habits of Dr. Smith. He continued his professorship in the University of Glasgow for a period of four years after this, directing his attention, and that of his students, somewhat less to that department of ethics, of which he had presented to the world his views, and treating more particularly of the subjects which come within the range of jurisprudence, and political philosophy. Of the long and profound attention he had devoted to this latter branch of moral science, he has bequeathed an imperishable monument to the world in

* "For man, who among all the various kinds of animals is alone endowed with the faculty of reason, cannot, like the rest, pass over such actions (ingratitude and injustice) with indifference; but reflecting on what he sees, and comparing the future with the present, will not fail to express his indignation at this injurious treatment, to which, as he foresees, he may at some time be exposed. Thus it is certain that all men must be shocked by such ingratitude through sympathy with the resentment of their neighbour, and from an apprehension also that the case may be their own. And from hence arises in the mind of man, a certain sense of the nature, and force of duty, in which consists both the beginning and the end of justice; and thus it is that the people begin to discern the nature of things, honourable or base, and in what consists the difference between them; and to perceive that the former, on account of the advantage that attends them, are fit to be admired and imitated, and the latter to be detested and avoided."—Polybius, Hist., Book vi. Ex. 1, Ch. i. Hampton's Translation.

* It may be allowed us to state in a few words what we have always considered to be the wide difference upon this great point, betwixt the doctrine of Mr. Hume and that of Dr. Paley, which it is surprising to see so often confounded. Hume proved from the phenomena of human nature as a fact, that whatever in moral conduct was intrinsically right, was useful. Paley laid it down as a rule, that whatever was expedient, was right; and thus converted a position of undeniable truth and beauty into an hypothesis full of fallacy, as the solution of a problem pregnant with evil in its consequences, when considered as a precept.

† Philos. Hum, Mind, vol. ii. Ch. 4, Sect. 6.

his "Wealth of Nations." His views upon the theory of jurisprudence, except inasmuch as he has embodied some of its important principles in that work, were confined to his lectures; though it is clear from an intimation conveyed in the closing paragraph of the "Moral Sentiments," and still more so from the advertisement he prefixed to the last edition of that work, written only a few months before his death, that it was a subject which, during the whole of his life, he had deeply meditated, and upon which he had always designed to communicate his labours to the public, if the engagements with which he was occupied during the latter period of it had not interfered to prevent him.

For himself, Dr. Smith has undoubtedly done enough, and so far as regards his own interest and his fame, it would be idle to indulge in regrets. For the world however, and for the interests of science, perhaps a greater loss has been rarely sustained than in the unfortunate circumstances, whatever they were, which concurred to deprive it of this most valuable portion of his labours. The enlarged views he had evidently formed of the objects and principles of legislation; the glimpses which we occasionally catch in his other writings of the spirit in which he was accustomed to contemplate such subjects; the pure and lofty sources to which he was accustomed to refer for those principles; all assure us of the invaluable addition which would have been made to this department of philosophy, had it been illustrated by his pen.

From this, however, and from his academical labours generally, he was withdrawn in the year 1763, by an invitation to accompany the Duke of Buccleugh on his travels; an appointment which was principally recommended to him at the time, by the desire which he had conceived of visiting the continent. The proposal, which was made to him through Mr. Charles Townsend, was liberal in the extreme; as might be expected to be made to such a man, to induce him to quit the scene of his honourable and useful labours, the society of his friends, and those studious delights, known only to the pure and devoted lovers of truth, which constitute the highest charm of human existence.

It is well known that, whatever pleasure Smith might derive from his tour, or whatever advantage from his connexion with the noble family of Buc-

cleugh, the separation from the university of Glasgow was a source to him of very heartfelt regret. An interesting and characteristic anecdote has been recorded of him, relative to his resignation of his duty as professor there, which is well worth preserving.

It was at the latter end of his course of lectures, that it became necessary for him to take his departure, and it was well ascertained that he had been at exceeding pains to provide, in a friend, a very competent successor for that part of the course which yet remained unfinished. He had suffered the greatest possible anxiety upon this point, and had done everything that might satisfy the most scrupulous of his friends and his pupils. This, however, did not satisfy the conscientious delicacy of Dr. Smith. He was of course aware of the high estimation in which he was held in the university, and the just value which was put upon his lectures. The day at length arrived when he was to address the students of his class for the last time, and it was a moment deeply affecting to both parties. He took leave of them in a tone of affection and regret, which enlivened their mutual sorrow; and when they were about to depart, he called them severally to his chair, and tendered to each of them, carefully folded in paper, the amount of the fee which he had received for the whole course of his lectures, notwithstanding so small a portion of it only remained unfinished. This was of course refused resolutely, as by acclamation; the professor, however, persisted in his endeavour, assuring them that he should not be satisfied otherwise, and that he should quit them under the impression of having failed in his duty, and of having wronged them, if they did not take back the fee for the entire course of lectures, which circumstances prevented him from completing. It was in vain that they assured him how far they were overpaid by the smallest portion of his labour bestowed upon them for the trifling emolument he derived; how real a wrong they should be committing to consent to such a proposal, and, in short, their firm determination by no means to listen to it. The professor was sensibly touched by their generous avowal, but he was not to be moved from his purpose. When they were at last on the point of quitting the lecture-room, he seized hold of the foremost of the students, and

absolutely forced the money into his hands, exclaiming, with his accustomed ardour, "Nay, gentlemen, I will not suffer this; it is a matter of conscience with me, and I must have my way;" and in this manner seeing him so deeply concerned in his object, they were obliged to submit; and thus to terminate a struggle of very unusual occurrence, equally honourable to the delicacy and generosity of the professor, and the attachment of his pupils.

It may safely be said, without disparagement to the many eminent successors of Dr. Smith, that his removal from the chair of moral philosophy was perhaps the greatest loss which the University of Glasgow has sustained. Of his merits and his method as a lecturer, we have presented our readers with an interesting memorial in the last section; but there is a circumstance related of him which may still better serve to evince the pains and sagacity which he exerted in the performance of his duty, and may suggest a standing and instructive lesson to both public and private teachers in all times and places. It is said that in the delivery of his daily lectures, his observation had been drawn, in an especial manner, to a certain student of his class, whose general habit of close and riveted attention to what was going on, became a mark or indication to the professor of the degree in which he succeeded in the development and expression of his subject—that he was accustomed to fix his eye upon the student in question, and as long as he found that he retained his hold of his attention, he felt satisfied; but whenever he remarked any relaxation in his manner, whether in the wandering expression of his countenance, or the position of his body, which seemed to indicate a diminishing interest in the lecture—"I took this as a valuable admonition," he used to say; "I was sure that there was something wanting either of connection in my reasoning or of sufficient fulness and perspicuity in my exposition, and I immediately paused. I recapitulated what I had been saying—I explained—I re-argued—I endeavoured further to illustrate my propositions, and I never felt quite satisfied that I was going on right, until I had regained complete hold of my monitor, till I saw by the resumption of his usual manner and gaze that I possessed the whole of his attention."

Having disengaged himself as well as

he could from the ties that bound him to Glasgow, Smith quitted that city in January, 1764, and joined the Duke of Buccleugh in London, where they remained together a couple of months. In March they set out on their route to Paris, and had the fortune to be joined at Dover by Sir James Macdonald, who accompanied them as far as the French capital, where they parted;—Sir James on his way to Italy, where he died within two years after, in the twenty-fifth year of his age. Were there no other testimony to the merit of this accomplished person, it would be sufficient to shew that he enjoyed in so high a degree the esteem and admiration of two such men as Dr. Smith and Mr. Hume; and a letter which the latter addressed to Smith, on the occasion of his death, contains strong evidence of this—"Were you and I together," says he, "we should shed tears at present for the death of poor Sir James Macdonald: we could not possibly have suffered a greater loss than in that valuable young man."

It was about the same time when Smith set out for the continent with the Duke of Buccleugh, that his friend Hume had been invited to join the embassy of the Earl of Hertford at Paris. Smith remained in that city only a few days; but before he left it we should mention that he addressed the rector of the University of Glasgow in form, tendering his resignation of the chair he had filled, and expressing himself as might be expected on such an occasion.—"I was never more anxious" (he says, in the conclusion of his letter) "for the good of the college than at this moment; and I sincerely wish that, whoever is my successor, he may not only do credit to the office by his abilities, but be a comfort to the very excellent men with whom he is likely to spend his life, by the probability of his heart and the goodness of his temper." On the receipt of this letter, the chair was declared to be vacant; and at a meeting of the heads of the university the sense of the value of their late professor, and the loss sustained by his removal was recorded in the following terms:—

"The University cannot help expressing their sincere regret at the removal of Dr. Smith, whose distinguished probity and amiable qualities procured him the esteem and affection of his colleagues, and whose uncommon genius, great abilities, and extensive learning, did so much honour to this society: his

elegant and ingenious 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' having recommended him to the esteem of men of taste and literature throughout Europe. His happy talent of illustrating abstracted subjects, and faithful assiduity in communicating useful knowledge, distinguished him as a professor, and at once afforded the greatest pleasure and the most important instruction to the youth under his care."

On quitting Paris, Dr. Smith and the Duke of Buccleugh proceeded to Toulouse, where they fixed their abode for a year and a half; enjoying the best society of the place, and finding in new manners and new modes of existence fresh sources of interest and information equally advantageous to both parties—to Dr. Smith affording opportunities of extending and confirming his previous acquaintance with men and books; and perhaps having the effect of biasing his judgment in some matters of taste and literature, rather erroneously, in favour of French criticism and genius, and of certain pre-conceived theories to which he was naturally inclined.

On quitting Toulouse, they spent the autumn of that year in a tour through the southern provinces of France and to Switzerland. At Geneva they remained a couple of months; and returned to Paris about Christmas 1765, where they continued till the month of October following.

It was at Paris, as we may well suppose, that Smith, after all, enjoyed by far the highest gratification which his journey afforded him. The capital, as Mr. Hume used to say, is the true scene for a man of letters; and if any, surely it was the capital of France at this period. Mr. Hume himself was there only for a short time after the arrival of his friend; but he was there long enough to introduce him to the most distinguished philosophers and men of learning then living in Paris:—D'Alembert, Helvetius, Marmontel, Turgot, Quesnai, and many others. The society of the two latter in particular we may be assured, from the congeniality of their sentiments upon subjects which Smith was at that time deeply meditating, must have been gratifying to him in a degree not very easy to conceive. It was that private and unreserved interchange of opinion in matters of moral and political science, with men like these, equally enlightened with himself, and animated by the same zeal for the happiness of mankind, that constituted his felicity; for, in other respects, the mere gaiety and brilliancy of Parisian

society were not adapted to his taste and manners; nor were his powers in conversation such as fitted him to shine amid its glare.

With Turgot and Quesnai he contracted a very close intimacy. With the former it was long supposed that he maintained an epistolary correspondence for a long period after his return to Scotland, a circumstance which excited naturally considerable interest, but of which Mr. Stewart, who took some pains to inquire into it, found reason to doubt the truth. It is certain that no memorial of such correspondence existed amongst Smith's papers, nor has any been made public from those of Turgot. It is well known, indeed, that Smith had no fondness for letter-writing, nor are we aware of three letters of his which have ever appeared in print. As he wrote few letters, it is equally to be regretted that he kept no journal during his travels, or if he did, that it was amongst the other papers which he took such anxious pains to secure the destruction of previous to his death.

Amongst the other eminent persons with whom Smith became acquainted whilst in Paris, and from whom he received distinguished marks of respect, was the family of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld; a circumstance not unworthy of being recorded, inasmuch as his introduction to that accomplished and amiable man led to the suppression in the latter edition of his "Theory of Moral Sentiments" of a rather severe animadversion upon the author of the celebrated "Maxims," which had been expressed in the first, where Smith had associated the name of Rochefoucauld with that of Mandeville. There is a letter extant from the Duke de la Rochefoucauld dated in 1778, addressed to Smith, transmitting to him a new edition of the "Maxims," in which he adverts with some pain to Dr. Smith's censure, and offers a poor apology, though the best that can be made, for a very shallow and pernicious performance, which persons equally shallow have taken for philosophy, but which nobody would have thought it worth while to remember or refute, if it had not been written in epigrams. In France he studied the principles of the economists in their writings as well as in their conversations; and was perhaps first led by the errors of that ingenious and amiable sect, to the contemplation of the more wide and just views to which

his mind was opening. The fine arts also and belles lettres, the poetry, and especially the drama of that country, subjects well worthy the contemplation of the philosopher, engaged no small share of his attention. The imagination and the arts which are addressed to it; the refined pleasures of which it is susceptible, and the taste to appreciate those pleasures, were then deemed not unworthy the attention of a philosopher. The principles upon which the arts are founded, the origin and nature of the emotions they excite, and the causes which, in different ages and nations, have diversified their character and operation, are subjects which were not only supposed to have some interest in themselves, but which have been investigated by such metaphysicians and economists as Hume and Smith, and Berkeley and Dugald Stewart, from the intimate and indissoluble connexion which they hold with the philosophy of the human mind; and as embracing an extensive and beautiful class of phenomena which form part of the great science of human nature. We are pleased to record such things in the character of Smith; because, however unimportant at other times, they are of consequence now, when one of the first of sciences is in danger of suffering in public estimation from the narrow and repulsive spirit which is occasionally mingled in its discussions: and because they shew that political economy, as a study, is not incompatible with a love of literature, and eloquence, and poetry; and assuredly not so with good taste and good writing*.

Dr. Smith's own taste in literature, as has been already hinted, was disposed to the admiration of what has been since denominated the classical, in contradistinction to the romantic, school of art. We do not remember, at this moment, a single reference to Shakspeare in the whole of his writings; while the lofty praise he has taken occasion to bestow upon the tragedies of Racine and Voltaire, his allusions to Pope, and encomium on Gray, exhibit more positive testimony in proof of this taste. But reserving what we have further to say respecting his general intellectual

character and literary taste, for the conclusion of our memoir, we proceed to detail the few remaining incidents of his life.

In October, 1766, Dr. Smith returned to London, where he and the Duke of Buccleugh separated; after having spent three years together, without the slightest coolness or disagreement; and, "on my part," says the Duke, in a letter which he addressed to Mr. Stewart, "with every advantage that could be expected from the society of such a man. We lived in friendship till the hour of his death; and I shall always retain the impression of having lost a friend whom I loved and respected, not only for his great talents, but for every private virtue."

Shortly after his return to England, he went down to his native place, where he continued to reside almost uninterruptedly for the next ten years of his life. An occasional visit to his friends at Edinburgh, with a journey to London once or twice in the interval, were his only diversions from a course of intense application. To his friends, to Mr. Hume in particular, this severe seclusion was a frequent matter of regret and complaint. Hume had returned to Edinburgh in 1669, after quitting his engagement with Lord Hertford; and in a letter written shortly after to Smith, he says, (dating from his house in St. James' Court, which commanded a prospect of the Forth and the opposite coast of Fife)—"I am glad to have come within sight of you; but as I would also be within speaking terms of you, I wish we could concert measures for that purpose. I am mortally sick at sea, and regard with horror and a kind of hydrophobia the great gulph that lies between us. I am also tired of travelling, as much as you ought naturally to be of staying at home; I therefore propose to you to come hither, and pass some days with me in this solitude. I want to know what you have been doing, and propose to exact a rigorous account of the method in which you have employed yourself during your retreat. I am positive you are in the wrong in many of your speculations, especially where you have the misfortune to differ from me. All these are reasons for our meeting, and I wish you would make me some reasonable proposal for that purpose. There is no habitation in the island of Inchkeith, otherwise I should challenge you to meet me there, and neither of us ever to leave the place till we are fully

* It is but justice to say here, that we are most happy to except from any censure implied in the above observations, two distinguished professors of political economy—we mean, Mr. Senior of Oxford, and Mr. Macculloch of the University of London—both of whom have invariably written and spoken in the spirit of their great master,

agreed on all points of controversy. I expect General Conway here to-morrow, whom I shall attend to Roseneath, and I shall remain there a few days. On my return, I hope to find a letter from you, containing a bold acceptance of this defiance."

There are extant several letters from this celebrated person, in which he exhorts his friend to leave his retirement, in terms expressive at once of the fondest friendship, and the most longing desire for his society: "I shall not take any excuse from your state of health," he writes on another occasion, "which I suppose only a subterfuge invented by indolence and love of solitude. Indeed, my dear Smith, if you continue to hearken to complaints of this nature, you will cut yourself out entirely from human society, to the great loss of both parties."

During the whole of this period, Smith may be considered as engaged in the composition of his great work. The room is still shewn at Kirkaldy, in which was written the greater part of the "Wealth of Nations;" and to that, and to scenes ennobled in like manner, by the exertions of genius and learning, will mankind some day make their pilgrimage in devotion to science and to virtue, when the shrines of kings and conquerors shall attract the homage which is often paid to them as little as they deserve it.

In the spring of the year 1773, he went up to London for rather a longer period than he was in the habit of leaving home; partly for the purpose of collecting some information, and making references relative to the work which now engrossed his whole thoughts.

There are so few letters of Smith's extant, as we have before observed, that we shall not hesitate to present to our readers the following, which he addressed to Mr. Hume on the point of his departure, as it serves to shew the extreme anxiety which he always felt about the destruction of his manuscripts:—

"Edinburgh, April 16th, 1773.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"As I have left the care of all my literary papers to you, I must tell you, that, except those which I carry along with me, there are none worth the publication but a fragment of a great work, which contains a history of the astronomical systems that were successively in fashion down to the time of Des Cartes.

Whether that might not be published as a fragment of an intended juvenile work, I leave to your judgment; though I begin to suspect that there is more refinement than solidity in some parts of it. This little work you will find in a thin folio paper in my back room. All the other loose papers, which you will find in that desk, or within the glass folding doors of a bureau in my bedroom, together with about eighteen thin folio books, which you will likewise find within the same glass folding-doors, I desire may be destroyed without any examination. Unless I die very suddenly, I shall take care that the papers I carry with me shall be sent to you.

"I am ever, my dear Friend,

"Most faithfully yours,

"ADAM SMITH."

The memorable year 1776 was now approaching, memorable in the life of Smith, as it was in the spring of that year that he gave to the world his immortal work, the "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," and in the autumn that death deprived him of his immortal friend, Mr. Hume.

Smith was in London at the time of the publication of his book; and the highest gratification, perhaps, afforded him on that occasion—higher, perhaps, than any which the praises of the world could give—was conveyed to him in the following letter, addressed to him by his dying friend. It was written from Edinburgh, only a few days before he set out on his journey to the South, as the only remaining hope of preserving his life; and testifies, almost in his last moments, the same amiable solicitude for his friends and their fame which characterised him throughout the whole of his existence. The letter is dated April 1, 1776—"Euge Belle! Dear Mr. Smith—I am much pleased with your performance, and the perusal of it has taken me from a state of great anxiety. It was a work of so much expectation by yourself, by your friends and by the public, that I trembled for its appearance, but am now much relieved. Not but that the reading of it necessarily requires so much attention, and the public is disposed to give so little, that I shall still doubt for some time of its being at first very popular. But it has depth, and solidity, and acuteness, and is so much illustrated by curious facts, that it must at last take the public attention. It is probably much improved by your last

abode in London. If you were here, at my fireside, I should dispute some of your principles. But these, and a hundred other points, are fit only to be discussed in conversation. I hope it will be soon, for I am in a very bad state of health, and cannot afford a long delay."

It was but a few months after the publication of "The Wealth of Nations," when the death of Mr. Hume gave occasion to one of the most memorable and honourable incidents in the life of Smith. Attached as they had been for years, by ties of no ordinary kind; revering and loving the friend of his life, for moral and intellectual qualities, rarely found apart, and still more rarely united, congenial in their sentiments upon every subject perhaps, save one—a difference upon which could create no abatement in the affections of two such men—Smith felt himself called upon, his heart yet bleeding under the loss he had sustained, to defend from calumny, now that he was dead, him, whom while living she had "never touched or attacked with her baleful tooth."*

It is well known that, from the nature of some of Mr. Hume's speculative opinions, coupled with the high celebrity of his name, his death had attracted no small degree of attention. It is known, too, that far more of zeal than charity had been displayed in a variety of rumours, equally false and absurd, which had been circulated relative to that melancholy event—calumny which, as we have said, had watched her hour, now poured forth her venom; and stories of death-bed horror and remorse, and agony and confession, were current throughout the land. It was easy to smile at all this; but it was felt to be due to the virtues of the man—to the benevolence of his affections and the unsullied purity of his life, to state the simple fact, that Mr. Hume's deathbed had betrayed no remorse whatever. Smith undertook to do this, undeterred by the obvious risk of incurring the odium of sharing the opinions of his friend, on the only subject perhaps on which they differed.

A few months only previous to his death, Mr. Hume had drawn up that brief but characteristic memorial of himself, entitled "My Own Life," and had left the care of its publication to Dr. Smith. To this memoir Smith appended his celebrated letter addressed to Mr.

Strahan, for the purpose, as he says, "of giving some account of the behaviour of their excellent friend during his last illness." The letter commences, therefore, where Hume's own account had ended; and having described the unruffled serenity of his mind and temper throughout the whole of his rapid decline—"his cheerfulness so great that his friends could not regard him as a dying man"—even to the last hour "so free from the smallest anxiety or low spirits that he never dropped the smallest expression of impatience, but when he had occasion to speak to those about him, doing it with the utmost affection and tenderness," and "that he died in such a happy composure of mind that nothing could exceed it."—He closes with the following passage, which we hesitate not to transcribe in this short memorial, (as we should have done the entire letter if our limits would admit,) because it is a greater honour to the writer than the subject; and because it is quite certain, that if there is one page from the pen of Smith that he would himself have desired to perpetuate, it this tribute to his friend, although it may be suspected that the warmth of friendship has somewhat overcharged the eulogy:—"Thus died," says he, "our most excellent and never to be forgotten friend, concerning whose philosophical opinions men will, no doubt, judge variously; every one approving or condemning them according as they happen to coincide or disagree with his own; but concerning whose character and conduct there can scarce be a difference of opinion. His temper, indeed, seemed to be more happily balanced, if I may be allowed such an expression, than that perhaps of any other man I have ever known. Even in the lowest state of his fortune, his great and necessary frugality never hindered him from exercising, on proper occasions, acts both of charity and generosity. It was a frugality founded not upon avarice, but upon the love of independency. The extreme gentleness of his nature never weakened either the firmness of his mind or the steadiness of his resolutions. His constant pleasantry was the genuine effusion of good nature and good humour, tempered with delicacy and modesty, and without even the slightest tincture of malignity, so frequently the disagreeable source of what is called wit in other men. It never was the meaning of his railery to mortify, and therefore far from offend-

* Hume—"My Own Life,"

ing, it seldom failed to please and delight even those who were the objects of it. To his friends, who were frequently the objects of it, there was not any one, perhaps, of all his great and amiable qualities which contributed more to endear his conversation. And that gaiety of temper, so agreeable in society, but which is so often accompanied with frivolous and superficial qualities, was in him certainly attended with the most severe application, the most extensive learning, the greatest depth of thought, and a capacity in every respect the most comprehensive. Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit."

The effect of such a testimony, from such a quarter, was to put to silence, and it is to be hoped, in a great measure to put to shame, the disgraceful cry which had been set up; yet it did not do so altogether. Some there were who still joined in it, and taking advantage, as might have been foreseen, of Smith's generous zeal, attempted to heap upon the living that obloquy from which he had rescued the dead. Dr. Horne, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, published a letter addressed to Dr. Smith, in which the spirit of the theologian is much more conspicuous than that of the Christian, veiled as it was under an affectation of humour and irony, that ill concealed the bitter feelings in which it originated. To this publication of Dr. Horne, Dr. Smith did not deem it at all necessary that he should make any reply. He felt that he had done enough, and that it would have been equally unworthy of himself and his cause, to have commenced a controversy with Dr. Horne upon the merits, personal or philosophical, of David Hume.*

SECTION 5.—*The "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations."*

It will scarcely be considered an exaggerated praise to say, that the "*Wealth*

of Nations" may be regarded as, perhaps, the most valuable acquisition which was made to philosophy and to science in the eighteenth century. It is of course quite beyond the limits of this memoir to offer an abstract or analysis of this great work. But, as in reference to the "*Theory of Moral Sentiments*," it was deemed proper to say a few words upon the subject itself of which it treats, and upon the leading principle of that theory; so it may be allowed us to offer a very few observations, in the same manner, upon the "*Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*," unquestionably the greatest production of Smith's genius.

In the closing passage of the "*Moral Sentiments*," he had promised, in some future work, to give an account of the general principles of law and government, and of the different revolutions they have undergone in the different periods of society; not only in what concerns justice, but *in what concerns police, revenue, and arms, and whatever else is the object of law; and to trace, in this way, those invariable principles which ought to run through, and be the foundation of the laws of all nations.*

In the "*Wealth of Nations*" he undertook to redeem this pledge, as far as regards police, revenue, and arms, by tracing the source, and nature, and progress of national wealth.

The fundamental principle, dimly conceived indeed, but never established and insisted upon before, upon which Smith raised, as upon a rock, the Science of Political Economy, was, that *labour is the source and origin of all wealth.* "Labour," says he, "was the first price, the original purchase money that was paid for all things. It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased;" and the mode by which the labour of man can be rendered most productive to his use and happiness is the problem to be solved by the economist.

Now the great cause of the increase in the productive powers of labour is found to consist in the *division of labour*—a division which arises in the first instance from the obvious suggestions of nature, and which, by giving birth in its progress to the institution of the various

* Having acknowledged our obligation to Mr. Stewart in the opening of this Memoir, it is only right that we should observe, that for several of the incidents which will be found in it, we are not indebted to that eminent person; and that amongst other circumstances in the very barren life of Dr. Smith, of which he has made no mention, this very remarkable one of his conduct upon the death of Hume has been passed over in silence. For this omission we can be at no loss to account: it was

dictated by the amiable solicitude for his friend's memory; and the apprehension that it might suffer from a revival of the asperities which his friendly zeal had excited. But a regard for truth prevents us from making a like omission.

arts, trades, and professions which exist in every advanced state of society, occasions that universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people.

But the effects of this principle have never in any society, or in any age of the world, been seen in their full extent, owing to the unjust and impolitic regulations which governments and legislators have at various times devised to control and thwart its operation. Instead of allowing every man to pursue his own interest in his own way, no society has ever yet been seen in which, from false views of policy, or from worse motives, extraordinary restraints have not been laid upon some branches of industry; while extraordinary privileges, equally injurious in their result, have been bestowed upon others.

In how different a spirit was conceived and executed the great work before us, is exhibited in every page. Smith aimed at, and he has succeeded in reducing that to a science, which had before been a succession of contrivances and devices, where no principle was ever referred to, and in which it was long supposed that science and principle could have no place*. The origin and continuance, indeed, of many of the most barbarous and oppressive institutions which tend to repress the energies of mankind, are to be traced very often to accidents, expedients, and prejudices, which belong as much to the people who are made to suffer from them, as to the laws and rules which have sometimes been the mere instruments of their establishment. To correct the policy of both was the object, and will be the lasting consequence, of his book. It was not by framing new forms of government, but by enlightening the policy of actual legislators, (as Mr. Stewart has well remarked,) that Dr. Smith, and other distinguished men of the last and present age, have attempted to ameliorate the condition of society. He endeavoured to shew, in one important branch of legislation, how much of the evils which affect its prosperity may be remedied by wise policy, and how much is the result of those higher and unalterable laws, by which the course of

human affairs is determined, and the operation of which, since they cannot be controlled, must be patiently endured.

An illustration of this may be found in that important part of his work wherein he treats of the causes which determine the rate of wages. When the economist describes, for instance, the manner in which the value of labour is affected by the combination laws, the apprentice laws, and the law of settlement,—he explains the mischief produced in all cases by their operation; in the injury sustained under them by the labourer himself, from their evident violation of that natural liberty and justice which is his right; in the inequality which they occasion in different departments of industry, and in different places, from their interference with that essential order and prosperity which would otherwise ensue from allowing every man, as long as he observes the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest in his own way. Thus far of the inexpediency and absurdity of such arrangements with respect to society at large; and of the influence which bad regulations or injurious laws may have in affecting the condition of the labourer, and that of the community of which he forms a part. But, when he comes to explain how, under all circumstances, and in every society where even the rights of individuals are most respected by the spirit of its government and its legislation, the general rate of wages must always depend upon the relative quantity of labour seeking employment, and of capital having employment to give: that it is a law of economy, resulting from a law of nature, that where labour is superabundant in proportion to capital, there it will necessarily be cheap; or, in other words, wages will be low—and that, on the contrary, where capital accumulates rapidly, and exceeds the supply of labour in the market, there labour will be dear, or, in other words, that wages will be high—when he has deduced this vital and important truth, and suggested thereby to the labourer, that on himself must mainly depend his ultimate prosperity, and that his condition for better or for worse is determined in this way by laws with which no human legislation can interfere, except in the removal of restrictions and prohibition, the political philosopher has done more for the peace and good order of society; and more to remove the sources of ill will, and promote a right understanding of their relative

* Even the capacious mind of Mr. Fox is said to have been sceptical with regard to some of the truths unfolded by Adam Smith; and within a much more recent period, we may remember that an illustrious statesman, now no more, spoke in Parliament, of the "application of philosophy to politics" as a thing having the air of paradox, and which it required a tone of apology to refer to.

position and duties in its different members; between labourers and their employers, between subjects and their government—more than can be achieved by the force of exhortation in a hundred volumes, or the force of power in a hundred armies.

But the complete development of the principle of the division of labour, it must be borne in mind, requires that the fullest and freest scope be allowed to competition, which is, in other words, the entire freedom of commercial intercourse. What the inhabitants of the different provinces of a great kingdom are to each other by the division of their employments, and the interchange of their commodities; so are the various people of the different countries of the globe. They are all bound, together by the same great law, the use and benefit which they may derive from the exercise of each other's skill, and the produce of each other's labour; and this economy of nations would be as obvious as it is in the case of a single people, if bad politics, springing out of bad passions; if ambition and the love of conquest, and the glare of military glory, which compose for the most part the history of nations, had not blinded men to their true interests, and corrupted the common sense and virtue of mankind.

To recommend this unlimited freedom of commercial intercourse; to shew how the restrictions which have been put upon it have in all cases defeated the object in view, and must continue to do so from the nature of things; to shew that the ordinary impulses we obey in pursuance of our own selfish interest, and which might seem to have no other end, are made, by the wise order of the great Author of our being to point far higher, and to be conducive in their results to the good of the society, as much as to that of the individual, or even more so, (for the advantage we plan for ourselves often escapes us, when that to society remains;) to shew, in the intercourse of nations as of men, "that *true* self love and social are the same," and that mutual wants, by the all-wise economy of Providence, were made to minister to mutual happiness;—that the instinctive desire by which every man is actuated, of improving his own condition (laws and government having no other province than that of taking care that, in pursuit of this end, he trenches not on the right of his neighbour), is the simple but solid

basis on which has been reared and secured the everlasting progress of nations in every age:—Such were the enlightened doctrines which it was the purpose of Smith's work to enforce; and it is obvious that all legislation which proceeds upon an ignorance or contempt of these laws, is to the body politic, just what the prescriptions of a physician would be to the natural body, who knew nothing of the animal economy, its functions, or its structure.)

As in the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," in treating of the moral constitution of man, he had been careful to distinguish the efficient from the final cause of our passions; he carried the same enlightened philosophy into all his investigations of human affairs, and shewed, as he beautifully expresses it, "that what is taken for the wisdom of man, is in reality the wisdom of God." There are numerous passages in his writings in which he inculcates the same sentiment, and enlarges on the folly of those speculators, who, in disregard of that wisdom, are constantly aiming to modify, by positive institutions, the natural order of society according to some arbitrary standard, instead of allowing it to advance in that course which is sure to conduct it, in the end, to the highest state of advancement of which it is susceptible. "Man," says he, in one of his early unpublished manuscripts, "is generally considered by statesmen and projectors, as the materials of a sort of political mechanics. Projectors disturb nature in the course of her operations in human affairs, and it requires no more than to let her alone, and give her fair play in the pursuit of her ends, that she may establish her own designs." "Little else," he adds, in another passage of the same paper, "is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things. All governments which thwart this natural course, which force things into another channel, or which endeavour to arrest the progress of society, at a particular point, are unnatural, and to support themselves are obliged to be oppressive and tyrannical."

It is in this spirit that political economy must be studied, if it is to maintain that rank among the moral sciences which it deserves, and in which it was placed by its founder. It would, undoubtedly, be unfair to deny that any-

thing has been added to this science since the publication of the "Wealth of Nations." But if it were admitted that some errors of Smith have been pointed out by subsequent inquirers, it will hardly be allowed that one or two corrections of doctrine in particular points make anything like amends for what political economy has lost of late in public estimation by the different spirit which has dictated, and the different tone which has breathed through some publications of a more recent date. The subjects of which this science treats have occupied a very increased degree of the attention, in the last few years, of speculative men, of all parties. They have done more than this. The science has attracted the attention of public men and statesmen. It has been referred to in parliamentary discussions; and what would have been most gratifying to its great expounder, some of its leading principles have been recognised and acted upon in important, and we trust, in permanent legislative enactments. There has been mixed up with these debates, it is true, much that might have been well spared, without loss to the credit of the assemblies in which they have taken place, and much interested and ignorant opposition has been arrayed against every amendment of the law; but nothing has been said or done by the most ignorant and most interested opponent of the progress of sound, political, and commercial freedom, which would so much have grieved the author of the "Wealth of Nations," as the arrogant and intolerant spirit, the daring paradox, and dogmatical propositions which have been promulgated by some of his pretended followers.

It is not needful to say more upon this point; but we think it requisite to say so much, for the benefit of those who know nothing of the "Wealth of Nations," and nothing of political economy; and in order that they may not be turned away by any spurious disciples of the science, from the study of a work, of which it has been truly said,—"that, abstracting entirely the author's peculiar and original speculations, there is no book, perhaps, in any language, containing so methodical, so comprehensive, and so judicious a digest of all the most profound and enlightened philosophy of the age."

The title which Smith adopted for his work, admirable as it is, and expressive of the nature of his investigations; and

the introduction, in which he presents a luminous outline of his method, give no indication of the many masterly collateral disquisitions contained in it; because, in so comprehensive a subject, it was not easy to express, nor is it always obvious for the reader to perceive, the reference they bear to the investigations with which they are associated. These disquisitions, however, form very often the most interesting and valuable portion of the book, to those especially who, having less relish for the study of some branches of political economy, are pleased when they find its reasonings made applicable to purposes of more general philosophy. We would instance the whole of the first chapter of the fifth book, as being of this description; and more especially Art. II. and III. of Part the 3rd, entitled, "Of the Expense of the Institutions for the Education of Youth, and of the Expense of the Institutions for the Instruction of People of all Ages."

It may be remembered too that in every science, the most important and interesting truths are very often such as are obvious to every capacity, and when clearly stated admit of no dispute; whilst those parts of it which are least valuable, and most liable to angry controversy, are happily such as comprise doctrines purely speculative, and which, if they are of difficult comprehension, may be safely left uncomprehended. Now, if this is true of any science, it is true of political economy: there are thorny and vexatious questions included within its range, but we doubt if, in any of the moral sciences, there are so many well ascertained truths of great and practical importance which may fairly be said to lie, with candid reasoners, beyond the reach of controversy.

SECTION 6.—*From the publication of the "Wealth of Nations" until the death of Dr. Smith.*

THE two following years after the publication of the "Wealth of Nations" were spent chiefly in London; and Dr. Smith, as well he might, after ten years almost unremitting and severe application, relaxed his powers in the pleasures of society, and mingled with the many eminent men who were then at the head of wit and literature in the capital. Dr. Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, Beauclerk, Reynolds, and the other members of the

Literary Club, which had been formed many years before, and of which Smith had been previously a member, were among those with whom he associated at this time; but neither history nor tradition has handed down to us any of those sallies of colloquial wit and eloquence for which many of his contemporaries, far less distinguished than himself in the higher walks of philosophy and learning, have become celebrated with posterity. That he was not distinguished by the flow or force of his mind in conversation is quite evident; and he is reported to have said of himself, that he was so much in the habit of husbanding his resources for his works in the closet, that he made it a rule never to talk in society upon any subject which he understood. This story, however, we should be inclined to disbelieve. Such voluntary and deliberate abstinence from the pleasures of social converse, even if it were allowed to be a virtue, would evidently be one very difficult in practice; and instead of allowing him the credit of so rare a species of self-denial, we are more disposed, in accounting for his habitual reserve, to class Dr. Smith with some other very eminent men (Addison and Dryden are amongst them), whom Johnson has so admirably described in the following passage:—

“There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.”*

The light in which the characteristic quality of his mind was regarded by his friends may be partly gathered, amongst other testimonies, from the allusion to him in the verses which Dr. Barnard addressed to the members of the club, not long after the publication of the “Wealth of Nations.” The stanza is as follows:—

If I have thoughts, and can't express 'em,
Gibbon shall teach me how to dress 'em
In words select and terse;
Jones teach me modesty and Greek,
Smith how to think, Burke how to speak,
And Beauclerc to converse.

In the year 1778, owing to the friend-

ship of the Duke of Buccleugh, and in some measure, we may trust, as a reward for his invaluable labours, Dr. Smith was appointed one of the Commissioners of the Customs in Scotland; an office which occasioned him to fix his residence in Edinburgh, where he continued to the end of his life.

If we should consider this appointment only in the light of an acknowledgement, of a recompense too rarely bestowed by men in power, for labours purely philosophical, and having nothing to recommend them but their intrinsic truth and beauty, few things can be more gratifying than the contemplation, to every lover of science and of virtue. Even the rewards which have been occasionally bestowed upon men of genius, by princes and their ministers, have too often been conferred for its prostitution to the mere purposes of power; the price of its past or future service, or the bribe for its silence when that alone was to be bought.

In the instance before us, it is gratifying to know, that the reward, if it was so meant, was equally honourable to the giver and the receiver. The works which Smith had published for the instruction of the world, had nothing to do with the possessors of power in his day, but to enlighten and direct its exercise. The parties and factions belonging to the period when he wrote could derive no particular or personal advantage from his writings; but mankind, in every age, will find in them the best corrective to faction and to party, by contemplating those eternal political truths with which party has rarely had anything to do, but which are equally salutary at all times, and under every form of government, for rulers and their people.

But if we should consider that the appointment which was bestowed upon Smith, however gratifying in other respects, was the cause, as there is reason to fear, of an interruption to his studies, and of the loss to the world of those speculations to which he had alluded in the closing passage of his *Moral Sentiments*, and the completion of which he is known never to have entirely abandoned but with his life; we shall be disposed to lament, perhaps ungratefully to lament, that he who had already done so much for the advancement of moral and political science, was not permitted to do more, by the fulfilment of his engagement to give to

* Life of Dryden.

his country a theory of jurisprudence, and in this manner to finish the structure which he had designed in his earlier days, and to fill up the measure of his fame. There is the greater reason to lament this, because the office imposed upon this enlightened man was one of no dignity or importance; but a duty of mere routine, the discharge of which must have been irksome to a mind like his, accustomed during his life to so different an application of his faculties. He might have been called, like Turgot, to the administration of his country, have enjoyed the melancholy satisfaction of endeavouring to enforce the maxims he had taught, and have found, perhaps, like him in the end, that the intrigues of the cabinet, the favour of the court, and the prejudices of the people, are equally adverse to the temper and the triumph of philosophy.

It was about this period that his friend and early patron, Lord Kames, in preparing a new edition of his work on the "Principles of Morality and Natural Religion," was induced to call in question the theory of Dr. Smith, and he therefore sent him a copy of the strictures he intended to introduce upon his work, before he proceeded to publication. To this Smith replied in the following letter, which we hesitate not to subjoin,—first, because, as we have before remarked, there are so few of his letters extant, and secondly, as it serves to shew the courtesy with which philosophic controversy was carried on in those days, and would generally be carried on, if the love of truth, and truth only, inspired it.

"November 16th, 1778.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I am much obliged to you for the kind communication of the objections you propose to make in your new edition, to my system. Nothing can be more perfectly friendly and polite than the terms in which you express yourself with regard to me; and I should be extremely peevish and ill-tempered if I could make the slightest opposition to their publication. I am, no doubt, extremely sorry to find myself of a different opinion both from so able a judge of the subject, and of so old and good a friend;—but differences of this kind are unavoidable, and besides—*Partium contentioneibus respublica crescit*. I should have been waiting on your Lordship before this time, but the remains of

a cold have, for these four or five days past, made it inconvenient for me to go out in the evening. Remember me to Mrs. Drummond, and believe me to be, my dear Lord, your most obliged,

"And most humble servant,

"ADAM SMITH."*

The greatest good conferred upon Dr. Smith by his official appointment, the greatest, indeed, that could be conferred by any additional wealth, was the power of extending the range of his benevolence, which is known to have been at all times exerted in acts of charity, far beyond what might have been expected of him, even after this moderate increase of his income. His excellent biographer has alluded to some remarkable instances of this nature in the life of Smith, which have been communicated to him by one of his confidential friends, where the assistance was on a scale as liberal as the manner of rendering it was delicate and affecting. Next to this was the satisfaction he derived from the privilege of spending the latter period of his life in the society of his oldest and dearest friends—free from those anxious cares with which the want of mere worldly competence has sometimes darkened the declining years of genius and of virtue. In the society of his mother, and of his cousin, Miss Douglas, who now formed part of his household, he enjoyed for some years every comfort and consolation that can be felt by one who is a stranger to the more endearing ties which bind a husband and a father. A simple, but hospitable table was always open to his friends.

In 1784 he lost his mother, and four years after, his cousin; and their death was felt by him as a severe and irreparable loss; little to be soothed by any worldly honour or applause; it being the effect, perhaps, of age and of all true wisdom, to render the mind as insensible to such vanities, as it is to dispose it to the influence of the social and domestic affections. Were it otherwise, the affliction under which he suffered might have been somewhat alleviated by one of the most gratifying circumstances

* There is a letter of Dr. Reid's extant, addressed to Lord Kames, in which he says that "after all, the system of sympathy is only a refinement of the selfish system," a criticism very like to saying that white is only a refinement on the colour of black—things, in which the plain sense of the world has discovered, some how or other, a pretty clear and durable distinction; notwithstanding the painter may blend them with his brush, or a logician, like Dr. Reid, confound them by his cavils.

of his life, which occurred about this period. In the year 1787 the University of Glasgow elected him rector of that learned body; and that he felt this compliment very sensibly, is manifest from the letter which he addressed to the principal of the college in acknowledgment of this flattering distinction—an honour, however, be it remarked, which could scarcely have been rendered where it would have reflected back so much credit upon those who had bestowed it, and which, we may venture to say, would not have been lessened in the estimation of Dr. Smith, had he lived to see it conferred upon some illustrious names who have shared it in our own times.

"No preferment," says he, "could have given me so much real satisfaction. No man can owe greater obligations to a society than I do to the University of Glasgow. They educated me; they sent me to Oxford. Soon after my return to Scotland, they elected me one of their own members, and afterwards preferred me to another office, to which the abilities and virtues of the never to be forgotten Dr. Hutcheson had given a superior degree of illustration. The period of thirteen years which I spent as a member of that society, I remember as by far the most useful, and therefore as by far the happiest and most honourable period of my life: and now, after three-and-twenty years absence, to be remembered in so very agreeable a manner by my old friends and protectors, gives me a heartfelt joy which I cannot easily express to you."

The life of this illustrious man was now fast drawing to a close. For a considerable period previous to his death his health had gradually declined, and his mind reverted in his last moments with renewed regret to what he had left undone of the works he had so long designed. His death was approaching far too rapidly to leave the slightest hope of doing more; and his anxiety about the fate of his manuscripts became excessive. It was so great, that during his last illness, after reiterating the most earnest entreaties for their destruction after his death, he was yet not satisfied, and desired that the whole of his papers, except the few fragments which he bequeathed to the care of Dr. Hutton, might be destroyed immediately. His mind seemed greatly relieved, when he was assured that this was done. A very few days before he

died, he had two or three of his select friends to sup with him, as was his custom; but finding his strength fail him, he retired to bed, and as he went away, he took leave of them by saying, "I believe, Gentlemen, we must adjourn this meeting to some other place." In the previous winter he had prepared a new edition of his "Moral Sentiments," and in the advertisement which he prefixed to it, he had still allowed himself to express a last and faint hope that it might yet be permitted to him to complete his long-projected work on jurisprudence. Even then, the ardour of his mind would not suffer him altogether to relinquish a hope which, it was but too evident, could never be fulfilled. He died only a few days after the meeting to which we have referred, on the 17th July, 1790, bequeathing the valuable library which he had collected to his nephew, Mr. D. Douglas; appointing his friends, Dr. Hutton and Dr. Black, the executors of his will; and entrusting to them the charge of publishing the few unfinished sketches which had been allowed to survive him.

SECTION 7.—*On the general Character and Writings of Smith.*

THE character of Dr. Smith, like that of all men whose lives have been devoted to the pursuits of philosophy and science, may be best traced in his writings. It has perhaps been the fortune of few men so eminent to have engaged so little in the commerce and bustle of active life, and of few, it has been said, to have been so little fitted for it: yet the intellectual and moral capacities of this illustrious man were evidently of an order to have filled, and adorned, the highest station in society; and, notwithstanding the abstraction in which he lived, for the most part, from the business of the world, and some peculiar and characteristic traits which occasionally marked his habits and his opinions, it is clear that, with an understanding of the loftiest range, he was free, in many respects, from that exclusiveness and pedantry which have been sometimes ascribed to philosophers of great name, and which have given currency, we suppose, "to the opinion, so industriously propagated (says Mr. Hume) by the dunces in every age, that a man of genius is unfit for business." In the establishment of his most enlightened theories, and those least of all subject to be dis-

puted in their ultimate and general tendency, he did not lose sight of that modification which they may occasionally require in practice, for the accomplishment of an immediate and beneficial purpose; and if the evidence of many striking passages in his works may be trusted, he did not incur as a philosopher, and would not have incurred as a statesman, the censure of rashly and unfeelingly adhering to an abstract principle in disdain of the interests which might be prejudiced, or even the prejudices which might have been shocked, by its application.

Nothing is more obvious, and nothing contributes so much to the beauty and value of his writing, as that in all his speculations he carried human life along with him; he never forgot that it was the chief praise and glory of philosophy to teach men how to act and to live; and he breathes through every page the admirable sentiment of a noble author

—“That whatever study tends neither directly nor indirectly to make us better men and better citizens, is at best but a specious and ingenious sort of idleness, and the knowledge we acquire by it only a creditable kind of ignorance—nothing more*.” This is eminently displayed in that valuable chapter to which we have referred, in the fifth book of the “Wealth of Nations,” on the “Institutions for the Education of Youth”—one of the most profound and powerful disquisitions in any language. Neither the abstractions of philosophy, nor the pride of learning, nor the habits of the professor, could render him insensible to the purpose to which they ought all to be subservient, namely, the real interest of those who are to be taught. But the spirit of monopoly in such institutions he shews to be as inimical to those interests as it is in every other case. “The endowment of schools and colleges,” he says, “have been opposed to this interest; they have not only corrupted the diligence of public teachers, but they have rendered it almost impossible to have any good private ones. Were there no endowed institutions for education, no system, no science could be taught for which there was not some demand. A private teacher could never find his account in teaching either an exploded and antiquated system of science acknowledged to be useful, or a science universally be-

lieved to be a mere useless and pedantic heap of sophistry and nonsense. Such systems, such sciences, can subsist nowhere but in those incorporated societies for education whose prosperity and revenue are, in great measure, independent of their reputation, and altogether independent of their industry. Were there no such institutions, a gentleman, after going through, with application and abilities, the most complete course of education which the circumstances of the times were supposed to afford, could not come into the world completely ignorant of everything which is the common subject of conversation among gentlemen and men of the world.”

—“The discipline of colleges and universities,” says he, in another passage, “is in general contrived, not for the benefit of the students, but for the interest, or, more properly speaking, for the ease, of the masters. Its object is, in all cases, to maintain the authority of the master; and whether he neglects or performs his duty, to oblige the students, in all cases, to behave to him as if he performed it with the greatest diligence and ability. It seems to presume perfect wisdom and virtue in the one order, and the greatest weakness and folly in the other. Where the masters, however, really perform their duty, there are no examples, I believe, that the greater part of the students ever neglect theirs. Such is the generosity of the greater part of young men, that so far from being disposed to neglect or despise the instructions of their master, provided he shews some serious intention of being of use to them, they are generally inclined to pardon a great deal of incorrectness in the performance of his duty, and sometimes even to conceal from the public a good deal of gross negligence.”

Such are the manly and liberal doctrines which he has put forth on this all-important topic. How unlike to the contracted and monkish sentiments entertained by many men, a great portion of whose lives has been passed within the walls of an university; and that too in the capacity of public teachers!

He was an ardent lover of freedom, but his devotions were not paid to her as to an unknown goddess, of whose attributes he was ignorant, and to whom his offerings were but an idle and a gaudy worship. If he loved freedom, he understood, better than the lovers of freedom have always done, in what it consisted: by what institutions it might be rendered

* Lord Bolingbroke—On the Study of History,

most permanent, and its substantial blessings be more widely and equally diffused. The scorn of oppression and injustice was in him an active and discerning sentiment; and, in his ardour for the interests and happiness of mankind, he felt alike, whether the means by which they were inflicted were legal or illegal. The poor and the weak, the humble and the unprotected, he knew had, in every age, endured more of evil from the operation of unjust laws than they have ever done from the mere violation of law. It was their condition, that is, the condition of the great mass of society, which he studied and wrote to ameliorate; and his language never assumes a loftier or more ardent tone than when he advocates their interests, —the interests of mankind at large, against some crying wrong, sanctioned, as it may happen to be, by law or charter. We might refer in proof of this to his observations on the laws against the combination of workmen, where he vindicates the poor against the power of the rich—on the law of settlement, the law of entails, and the severe and contemptuous tone in which he censures the spirit of commercial monopoly under every form. Nor did he fail to visit with equal severity the sentiments in which such impolitic and unjust regulations have their origin. Witness the indignant manner in which he replies to the miserable complaints of those who, disposed to view every improvement in the condition of the labouring classes of society as an encroachment upon their superiors, censure every increasing comfort they enjoy as a luxury to which they have no right. As he reprobates the injustice and impolicy of any attempt to retard their advancement, if such were possible; so has he treated with still greater contempt the monstrous and cruel paradox which has been sometimes maintained, that a liberal rate of wages relaxes the industry of the labourer, and that he never works so well as when he is ill requited for his labour.

"The liberal reward of labour," says Smith, "as it is the effect of increasing wealth, so it is the cause of increasing population. To complain of it is to lament over the necessary effect and cause of the greatest public prosperity. As it encourages the propagation, so it increases the industry, of the common people. The wages of labour are the encouragement of industry, which, like

every other human quality, improves in proportion to the encouragement it receives. Where wages are high, accordingly, we shall always find the workmen more active, diligent, and expeditious. In cheap years, it is pretended they are generally more idle, and in dear ones more industrious than ordinary. A plentiful subsistence, therefore, it has been concluded, relaxes, and a scanty one quickens their industry. That a little more plenty than ordinary may render some men idle cannot be doubted; but that it should have this effect upon the greater part, or that men in general should work better when they are ill fed than when they are well fed, when they are disheartened than when they are in good spirits, when they are frequently sick than when they generally are in good health, seems not very probable." . . .

"Our merchants and master-manufacturers too (he says, in another part of his work) complain much of the bad effects of high wages in raising the price, and thereby lessening the sale of their goods both at home and abroad. They say nothing concerning the bad effects of high profits. They are silent with regard to the pernicious effects of their own gains. They complain only of those of other people."—*Wealth of Nations*, Book I. ch. 8—9.

Yet his zeal in the best of causes never made him lose sight of the end of all law—the preservation of the peace of society. He takes care to shew that it is not the province of a good or a wise man to seek the establishment of his principles by violence or undue pertinacity, and in disdain of the prejudices and institutions of the community which he seeks to influence.

"The man, whose public spirit is prompted altogether by humanity and benevolence (he says, in one of the finest passages of his writings) will respect the established powers and privileges even of individuals, and still more those of the great orders and societies into which the state is divided. Though he should consider some of them as in some measure abusive, he will content himself with moderating what he often cannot annihilate without great violence. When he cannot conquer the rooted prejudices of the people by reason and persuasion, he will not attempt to subdue them by force; but will religiously observe what by Cicero is justly called the divine maxim of Plato, never to use violence to his country, no more

than to his parents. He will accommodate, as well as he can, his public arrangements to the confirmed habits and prejudices of the people, and will remedy, as well as he can, the inconveniences which may flow from the want of those regulations which the people are averse to submit to. When he cannot establish the right, he will not disdain to ameliorate the wrong; but, like Solon, when he cannot establish the best system of laws, he will endeavour to establish the best that the people can bear*.

Finely as he has tempered in his writings the rigour, if we may so speak, of his speculative doctrines; and careful as he is at all times, by the infusion of moral sympathy, to correct any error or evil that might lurk in the logical inferences to be deduced from them; with a sagacity in his general reasonings, alive to the nicest shades in the conduct of the understanding and the passions; his excellent biographer has given us reason to think that his unpremeditated opinions both of men and books were not always such as might have been looked for, from the soundness of his judgment, and the singular consistency of his principles as a philosopher. His discernment of the character of individuals was often defective, and apt, like his particular judgments on other occasions, to be influenced by accident and humour. He seemed to be habitually inattentive to familiar objects and common occurrences, and "has frequently exhibited instances of absence," says Mr. Stewart, "which have scarcely been surpassed by the fancy of La Bruyère."

Some striking and amusing instances of this infirmity have been recently made public, by a lively and agreeable writer, from whose powers of humorous description, however, it may well be supposed they have lost nothing in the narrative.† We will mention one circumstance which is recorded by Mr. Mackenzie, in illustration. When that gentleman wrote the beautiful story of La Roche, in the 'Mirror,' in which, with reference to the character of Mr. Hume, he embodied the sentiments which the good nature and benevolence of that illustrious man might have suggested under the circumstances imagined, he was particularly anxious that

there should not be a single expression in it, which could give offence or uneasiness to any friend of Mr. Hume's; and he read the story to Dr. Smith, desiring him to say, if there was anything in it that he would wish to be omitted or altered. He listened to it very attentively from beginning to end, and declared that he did not find a syllable to object to, but added (with his characteristic absence of mind, says Mr. Mackenzie), *that he was surprised he had never heard the anecdote before.*

It may be easily supposed that with such a propensity to abstraction, he did not readily fall in with the tone of general conversation, and that in consequence of that, and of his professional habits as a lecturer, he was apt to express rather exclusively, the result of his own meditations, without sufficient reference at all times to the topic in hand, or the immediate purpose of its discussion; and that his style had more of the precision of a formal discourse, than of the ease and freedom which constitute the charm of colloquial intercourse. It is reported of him too that he was occasionally more positive in the assertion of his opinions than is always becoming in a philosopher, and that notwithstanding the extent and variety of his information, he erred sometimes from taking a partial and peculiar view of a subject, as it might chance to be connected at that particular moment with some passing speculation in his mind.

His learning was extensive and profound. His study had not been confined to the subjects which might appear to have occupied the whole labour of his life. The sciences of ethics and politics were not taken up by him, as detached and abstract branches of philosophy. They came presented to his mind as part of the greater science of human nature, to which he had always devoted himself; and in the contemplation of which he borrowed every aid which a careful observation of the various institutions which have existed among men, their history, their language, and the monuments of their arts and letters, could afford him. But he loved literature, as he loved virtue, for its own sake, for its intrinsic beauty and worth. In its best records, those which exhibit the actions, and display the passions and sentiments of men, whether in philosophy where they are traced to their causes; in history, in

* Moral Sent. vol. ii. part vi. sect. 2.

† Vide Quart. Rev. On the Life of John Home, ascribed to Sir Walter Scott.

poetry, and oratory, where, under different forms, they are beheld in their operation; amid that exhaustless variety of circumstances and vicissitude of fortune, under which man has been seen at once an agent and a victim; he found the everlasting materials for his speculations, the real and only data of all moral science. He did not affect to despise, economist as he was, the imperishable productions of human wit and genius, the poetry of Homer or of Milton, the eloquence of Demosthenes, or of Fox; because he could find in their works no argument for the theory of rent, or the doctrine of population. Nor was he pleased to think it the part of a philosopher or a philanthropist, to sneer at the domestic affections, and the social virtues, in the most comprehensive investigations which he instituted, and which had for their object the common benefit of mankind.

In his last hours he found delight in the tragedies of Euripides and Racine; and the drama, and the principles of the dramatic art, and of poetry in general, formed a frequent and favourite topic of his conversation. He was a great advocate for rhyme, a more unqualified one even than Dr. Johnson, for he was accustomed to contend for the propriety of it as well on the stage, as in all other departments of poetry*.

As he loved to read it, he was accustomed to quote poetry, and the number of beautiful passages which he had treasured in his memory, and was in the habit of introducing in conversation, was remarkable in a man distinguishing by so many higher acquisitions.

His peculiar taste is best exemplified in the style of his writings, which possess, even in that respect alone, merit of a very high order. If he has not (and who has?) the grace, the "careless, inimitable beauties,"† of Mr. Hume, it was owing in some measure to his not having mixed in such varied society; a circumstance which, acting upon the refined taste of the latter, lent to his com-

positions that inexpressible charm, which Gibbon may be supposed to have felt, when he describes himself in his ambition to emulate him, as "closing the volume with a mixed sensation of delight and despair*."

The great aim of Dr. Smith as a writer, and his great merit, is a marvellous perspicuity in the exposition of his ideas. Often diffuse, but never prolix; sometimes condensed, but never entangled in his expression; he unfolds the process of his reasonings so amply, that he leaves nothing to be supplied by his reader but a careful attention to his matter. Mr. Fox however is reported to have said of him, perhaps hastily, that he was unnecessarily diffuse, and fond of deductions where there was nothing to deduce. Mr. Stewart, with greater reserve, has ventured to hint a criticism nearly similar, and has ascribed this quality in his compositions to his early fondness for the study of the Greek geometry.

His greatest defect in the "Wealth of Nations," along with some faults in the arrangement of his subject, arises from his frequent digressions; his long dissertations upon some incidental questions, which frequently encumber the text, and intercept that complete and unbroken view of the subject as a whole, which a didactic author, who desires to interest and inform his reader, should always endeavour to preserve, from the first simple proposition with which he sets out, to the final developement of his system in all its parts. This defect arose partly from a peculiarity in his judgment, which led him to reject the use of marginal annotations; so useful in treating of many subjects, and certainly, it would seem, not the least so, in many which Dr. Smith undertook to discuss in his great work. It is curious, however, that, in the "Wealth of Nations," there are, we believe, but three or four notes, of four or five lines each, in the whole work, and these containing little more than references to authorities; whilst, in the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," there occurs but one of considerable length, and of importance more than equal to its length, in which it is remarkable that he has embodied a piece of reasoning, having essential reference to his system, of which it may be said, indeed, to furnish one of the strongest supports,

* It is well known that the two Doctors got to rather high words once at Mr. Dilly's table, where they met at dinner. Many years after this, when Johnson, on some occasion, was maintaining the superiority of rhyme over blank verse, Boswell observed that he had heard Adam Smith enforce the same criticism in his lectures at Glasgow. "Sir," said Johnson, "Smith and I once met, and we did not much take to each other; but if I had known that the dog loved rhyme as much as you say he does, Sir, I should have hugged him,"

† Gibbon's Memoirs.

* Gibbon's Memoirs.

and the clearest illustrations to be found, perhaps, in the whole work.*—†

There is no doubt that he bestowed great care upon the style and composition of his works. And after all his practice as a writer, he is said never to have acquired that facility which is often attained by it, but to have written as slowly, and with as much labour at last, as he had ever done. This however was the effect, in some measure, of the nature of his speculations, and the general character and conduct of his understanding. In all his works, though we find passages of exceeding eloquence, force, and beauty, he is most distinguished for being a deliberate reasoner, and a candid and cautious thinker. It was usual with him, when employed in composition, not to write with his own hand, but to walk about his room dictating to an amanuensis. He had collected, in the course of his life, a very valuable library, which he bequeathed to his cousin, Mr. David Douglas. As he was a lover of books, he was more attentive to their condition, and the outward fashion of them, than is usual with scholars in general. When Mr. Smellie once called upon him, and was admiring a splendid copy of some classic author, and the general elegance of his shelves,—“You see, Sir,” said Smith, “if in nothing else, I am a beau at least in my books.”

Besides the two great works of which we have spoken, and on which the fame of Dr. Smith will for ever rest, we must not omit to mention the very original and ingenious dissertation on the formation of languages, which was appended to the early editions of the “Moral Sentiments,” and still continues to be published along with that work; and the few masterly, but unfinished sketches which were published shortly after his death. The tract on languages is a piece of extensive learning and profound observation; but though Mr. Stewart

has bestowed high praise upon it, it seems hardly to have attracted the notice it deserves. The longest and most important of the posthumous essays, is entitled a “History of Astronomy,” in which the author proposes to illustrate the principles which suggest and direct philosophical inquirers, by an account of the origin and progress of that interesting science. The same train of thought was pursued in two shorter and more imperfect essays, on the “History of the Ancient Physics,” and that of the “Ancient Logic and Metaphysics.” Along with these is a disquisition of very great beauty, entitled, with his accustomed amplitude of language, “On the Nature of that Imitation which takes place, in what are called the Imitative Arts;” and another, on the “External Senses”—all abounding in great originality of thought, exquisite illustration, and expression the most expanded and luminous.

In the “Sketches of the History of Philosophy,” we find the same turn and tendency of mind which he has displayed in his greater works; a disposition which delighted to ascribe the first exercise of the imagination and the intellect, not to any view of profit or advantage in its results, but to a natural desire to fill up the void which was felt by the mind, from its inability to comprehend and connect together the various, and, as it would seem, the disjointed appearances which present themselves to its contemplation in the scenes and operations of nature. “Philosophy,” says Dr. Smith, “is nothing but the science of the connecting principle of nature.” It is an art addressed to the imagination, which seeks to adapt and reconcile to that faculty some theory, more or less satisfactory, of the phenomena, which, at first view, are void of order and connexion, and of meaning. The superiority of the Newtonian philosophy, he maintains, consists only in this,—that it is the most pleasing solution of the great problem of nature which has yet been given—that it connects more easily and more simply the appearances of the heavens in the fancy—not that it is by any means to be regarded as unfolding the actual chains which nature makes use of to bind together her several operations.

In the few observations which have been made upon the writings of this illustrious man, as in the short extracts introduced from them, it has been less our object, as will be seen, to dwell upon

* Dr. Smith was betrayed into this rejection of marginal writing, by his classic adherence to the plan of composition of the ancients, who were equally ignorant of the use and the abuse of our modern practice; but many of whose works would evidently have been much improved by a moderate adoption of it; and every reader of the “Wealth of Nations” must have felt how much he would have been relieved in the study of this great work, if many portions of it, which might be pointed out, had been removed from the text to the margin, to be consulted in their proper places, and not allowed to interrupt, as they often do, a chain of profound and subtle reasoning, or an interesting deduction of consequences of the highest importance to the establishment of the point in question.

† Vide “Theory of Moral Sent.,” Part ii. Sect. 1.

their merits with reference to any *system*, either of morals or economy, or to the soundness or fallacy of any particular doctrine, than to point out the admirable spirit which animates every part of that system; and those principles to which he always appeals, as the legitimate sources whence alone we can draw the materials of all moral and political institutes. To have done more than this, to have given even a very brief abstract of his system, in either of his two great works, would have far exceeded the limits of the present memoir; would require, and might well deserve, a separate treatise.

What has been attempted, however imperfectly, may not be altogether without its use, at least until propositions in the moral, as in the mathematical sciences, shall admit of demonstration. When that shall be the case, and the results of our reasonings can be submitted to so decisive a test, the sources whence we derive them, and the mode in which they are conducted, may be alike indifferent, and cannot assuredly affect in the slightest degree the truths demonstrated. Till then, however, it must be considered as no unimportant part of that species of philosophy which, in the expressive language of Lord Bacon, comes home to men's business and bosoms, to temper its doctrines by moderation and modesty; to engage the sympathies on our side of those we undertake to teach, and not to repel them; to endeavour to shew, if we can, that the doctrines we inculcate may be traced to a higher wisdom than that of man, by being in conformity with the rules by which nature seems to work, and in furtherance of principles which she has evidently implanted for the accomplishment of her own great ends.

No philosopher has so constantly borne in mind as Dr. Smith, that in the moral, as in the physical constitution and frame of man, nature has made cer-

tain provisions for his attainment to virtue and to happiness, which the ignorant may overlook, and the arrogant may disregard, but with which the wise will only study to co-operate. And all the precepts we can put forth will derive their best sanction, and afford the strongest presumption in their favour by their being shewn to be in unison with those simple instincts of our nature, by which alone, as individuals, we are first taught to apprehend a distinction betwixt good and evil,* and which, in the obvious arrangements they suggest for the social union, were equally intended by our great Creator as lights to the economist and the legislator for the framing of those laws and institutions which take place in the wider and more complicated associations of men. It was in this excellent and truly enlightened spirit, that Smith, by applying the experimental method of reasoning to moral subjects, attained the vantage ground of that higher philosophy of which it is the glory of Bacon to have pointed out the road;—by which Newton ascended to the discovery of the sublimest truths in physics;—and by the careful cultivation of which alone, if ever, it may be hoped, that the moral and political sciences will be placed on a foundation equally enduring, and when knowledge in them will more surely become power to man, as their reference to his happiness and advancement is more obvious and immediate.

* It has become usual of late, even in moral and political discourses, to regard all reference to authority as marks of a poor and illogical understanding. In the physical sciences, those more especially which rest upon mathematics, (as we have said in the text) the argument from authority is of course out of the question. It is different we conceive in other subjects;—and though we have little respect for an hypothesis, however supported, which appeals from the universal sense and feelings of mankind, an authority that appeals to that sense and those feelings is entitled to a good deal, and for our parts we should be satisfied to take our chance of error, in a question concerning the principle of moral approbation—for instance, with Hume and Smith, and Stewart and Mackintosh.

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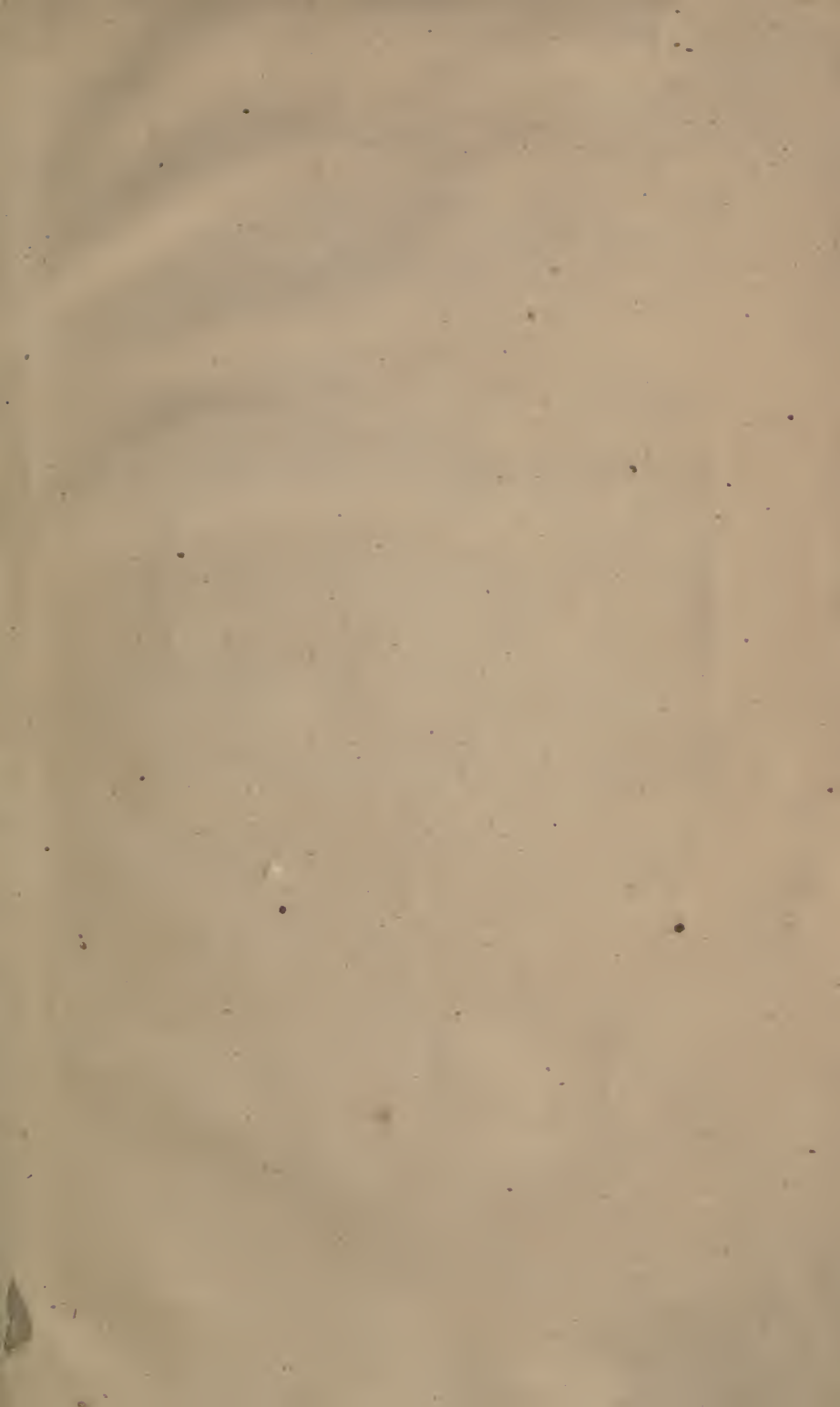
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